THE MYSTERIOUS STORY BOOK

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THE MYSTERIOUS

STORY-BOOK;

OR,

THE GOOD STEPMOTHER.

BY WHOM?

"My little children, love one another."

NEW YORK:
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY,
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1856.

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PREFACE.

We look in the face of a familiar friend, in the intimacy of our own homes, and see the heart and mind shining through it—the play of light and beauty, that a stranger cannot see; but when we are to present that face to eyes, if not blinded, certainly not enlightened by affection, we look at it fairly, and see only what it expresses, and not the treasures, intellectual and moral, to which it is the key. It is with a judgment thus modified, that I venture to recommend to the reading public the "*Mysterious Story-Book.*"

It would need no flourish of trumpets, but that its modest author is unknown, and has neither the means nor the egotistic ingenuity

to herald herself. Once before the public, the work may rest on its own merits.

It is a very common remark, and a sad truth, that while intellectual education through our excellent public schools is developing the minds of the least favored classes, moral training does not keep pace with it. The laborious teacher, while he is going through the school drill, may and does, now and then, drop a good seed into the heart; but this is "overwork," not his appointed duty, and he cannot give to this seed the wise and vigilant culture it requires. The bright lads of our "Free Academy" are to be our future writers, statesmen, and rulers. A teacher of morals and manners is needed in the homes of some of these lads, and what can be better fitted for this mission than the class of books written by the author of the "Wide Wide World;" the "Lamplighter," and "The Mysterious Story-Book" (which last may fairly take rank with those already so popular).

"The Mysterious Story-Book" may give to

the plastic mind its first, and an ineffaceable impression of the beauty as well as the policy of truth ; of the charm of refinement, and of the divine origin and heavenward tendency of all morality.

I will not discourage the reading of my preface, by adding to its length. I should not have written it at all, but for the hope that an old acquaintance of the reading public might possibly advantage a friend, just timidly stepping over their threshold, by speaking an introductory word of praise.

C. M. SEDGWICK.

New York, 30*th May*, 1855.

THE

MYSTERIOUS STORY-BOOK.

CHAPTER I.

"It is no use to try, Kate, your little arm cannot stretch far enough;" said a bright looking boy, as he raised himself to his utmost height, and held a paper in one hand, over his head, while with the other he kept off a little girl, who was laughing too heartily to succeed in the attempt she was making to snatch the paper from his hand. "Indeed, sis, it's no use, unless your arm had a Procrustes stretch."

"Procrusty," repeated the girl, letting her hand fall. "I wish you wouldn't use words I don't understand."

"Ha, ha, ha, Kate! don't you know who Procrustes was? Well, I'll read you all about him

some of these days. And now, Kate, hands off, and you shall read my translation."

"A translation of what, brother?"

"Oh, that's a secret, sis, so don't tell if I trust you."

"No danger. Don't you know when mamma told me that Miss Low was going to be married, and said it was a great secret, and I mustn't tell any body, that I didn't tell even you?"

"Ha, ha, ha! no, you didn't tell me, but you asked me to guess who was going to be married, and I guessed Miss Low; that was a good joke, Kate, ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh Charley!" exclaimed the girl, throwing an arm round her brother's neck, and smoothing his wavy locks, "I don't think that's generous, to laugh at me now, when mamma forgave me, and said she'd trust me again, as my tears proved how dearly I had bought experience, and she didn't think I'd ever be so incautious again; yes, those were her very words."

"Excuse me, Miss Kate Morton, and to pay you for my laugh, I'll tell you my secret." He drew her closer to him, and pressed his lips to her glowing cheek.

"And I promise you not to set any body guessing," exclaimed the delighted child, returning his affectionate greeting.

"You know, Kate, Phil Preston has a sister who lives several miles out of town, and takes care of an old superannuated uncle. She hardly ever goes out, and has very little society, so he has commenced publishing a little newspaper for her amusement."

"A little newspaper! what a pretty idea," exclaimed Kate, clapping her hands with pleasure.

"It's to be called The Fricassee, so I think you had better throw in the merry-thought of a goose, little Mother Goosy,"—one of Charley's nicknames for Kate, because the old lady's melodies were so often on her lips.

"I never heard that a goose had a merry-thought," said the girl, laughing.

"Well, Phil asked me to give him some of my school compositions, but those are all torn up, so I told him I'd try to translate a German fable; but I found this would take me a great while; and may-be I shouldn't do it well, as dear Mr. Schwartz is gone, and I've no one to help me, so I wrote this fragment," said he, showing Kate the paper which she had been trying to reach.

"But what does this mean, Charley; a translation from the German of—oh dear, one of those shocking hard names, I–che—do, Charley, tell me what it is." Charles was much amused. "Press your tongue against your front teeth, and pronounce the three first letters, which is the first syllable; see, just as I do," and he gave one of those sounds only to be acquired by practice. His sister tried, but could produce no sound at all. "Why, not so, child; don't put your tongue against the upper row of teeth, the lower, to be sure." Kate tried again, but she could not get beyond ish, itch, and ic. "Well, no matter," said the boy, joining his pupil in a hearty laugh at her ineffectual efforts. "If you can't read German, you can read English very well, and I want you to try your very best on my piece. Mind all the stops, and all the pauses, sis, and give the proper sound to every word."

"As you have written it, I think you'd better read it yourself," said Kate; "I know it will appear much better."

"No, no, I'm going to play Dionysius, and listen to my effusion."

"But I thought you told me that this was a translation, Charley?"

"Aye, that's the secret that you mustn't divulge. Translated from the German of Ichweisnicht is only a make-believe, and as Phil don't understand German, he won't know that the author is an invention of mine, or only a man of straw."

"And isn't that a story, Charley?"

"Why, according to mamma's definition, I'm afraid it is," said the boy musingly; "but I don't think it's any more harm than your hiding little Kitty Lester under mamma's apron, and telling me to look for her in the garden."

"I don't think it is, Charley, and mamma would certainly have told us if that was wrong. So now I'll begin," said the child, as she seated herself on a bench opposite her brother, while he looked as much like the tyrant, as a bent brow, and folded arms could make him. At this moment Mrs. Morton entered. "Just in time, mamma," exclaimed Charles, and taking his mother's hand, he playfully led her to a chair.

"What's going on?" asked Mrs. Morton, as she seated herself.

"Only I'm playing Dionysius, and Kate is going to read my transcendent poem."

"But where is the audience?"

"Oh, never mind that, we'll imagine one," said Charley, pompously; "or let the chairs be listeners; I guess they'll show as much feeling as some audiences; for when I went to the concert, every body was sitting as quiet as if they had no ears, and I—I couldn't help it—I cried like a baby; I was so ashamed, that I don't want to go to another concert. But no matter about the audience, mamma, you shall be Philoxenus. You know Dionysius valued his opinion more than any other."

"But suppose I should consider the risk of being a tyrant's friend greater than the honor, and should decline it?"

"A tyrant! that was just the subject of Phil Preston's last theme."

"What?" asked Mrs. Morton.

"That Dionysius was no greater tyrant than hundreds in ancient and modern times, who have never acquired so frightful a surname."

"Well, suppose, like Philoxenus, I should give my opinion against your poem?"

"I'll promise not to send you to the mines, mamma, even for a day. But mustn't that have been

"Proceed," says the tyrant.—P. 15.

a rich scene, when Dionysius, at the feast he had prepared to celebrate the restoration of Philoxenus to favor again, read passages from his poems, and asked Philoxenus's opinion; and he, instead of answering the question, turned to the guards in waiting, and cried in a half-serious, half-comic tone, 'Carry me back to the mines?' I never read it without having a good laugh."

"However it might have seemed to the spectators, the recital is certainly very diverting. But if it please thee, mighty monarch, command thy reader to proceed, as weighty matters call me hence." "Proceed," said the tyrant, in a tyrannical voice. But this was not so easy, as Kate could do nothing but titter at the mock solemnity of the scene.

"Kate, Kate," exclaimed her mother.

"I will go on in a minute, mamma, if you'll just tell me whether that gentleman was sent back to the mines."

"No, child, no; do go on."

Her mother's impatient tone sobered Kate, and she began.

"A fragment translated." "Ha, a translation," interrupted Mrs. Morton. So Charley was

obliged to repeat his secret, and then related what had just passed on the subject of falsehood.

"Strictly speaking," remarked Mrs. Morton, "truth seem s tobe a straight line, over which no one may pass with impunity; but I think you have only availed yourself of a literary latitude, allowed writers. No one accuses the author of 'A new Home' of untruth, for calling herself Mrs. Clavers. Besides, though Phil may be hoaxed by your unpronounceable German name, his sister is a fine German scholar, and will soon discover the ass's ears beneath the lion's skin."

Kate laughed, her mother joined, but Charles looked grave. Mrs. Morton, spite of cares and perplexities, loved a joke better than any thing in the world, except her children, and did not always consider how far the point might penetrate. The remark threw a deeper shadow on the tyrant's brow, but he remained silent.

"Depechez vous, vite vite! Kate, or I must go," exclaimed the mother, without seeming to observe the effect of her pleasantry.

Kate began—"A fragment from the German, by Ichweisnicht."

"Cast thy clear glances towards the morning land, my sight," said Age and Blindness to a very incarnation of youth and love, "and tell me what thou seest." "An ink-black cloud," responded the cherub child, "too darkly frowning to be shown to you, dear grandmother, but it is fast settling down, and will soon be gone. But oh! beautiful, beautiful on the opposite side is an ocean of gold, studded with purple islands, and a group of poor little ragged children have left their sports and are gazing upward. Beside them stands a pair in rich attire, and they gaze upward too."

"On which of Nature's worshippers fall most of her glad smiles, my child?"

"On all—on all alike, dear grandmother, for they are Heaven's ministers to rich and poor, just and unjust; but still methinks there rests a warmer tint upon the children's merry eyes and silken tresses, spite of the tatters in which Poverty has wrapped their buoyant limbs."

"Thus, ever thus, sweet comforter, reveal the bright and glorious, for it answers to the inward, all-irradiating light. Darkness has only passed upon the mortal vision, it reaches

not the immortal. Though I cannot see thy face, pure benediction, thy voice has pictured it upon my heart, with spirit-hues that cannot fade."

"Well done, Charles," said his mother, playfully clapping her hands, "quite a pretty morceau—a sort of whip-syllabub that hardly suffers you to touch it, before it vanishes. The next time you invite us to a treat, let the quantity equal the quality."

"Well, brother, I don't think there's any goose about that," said the affectionate Kate, coming close to her brother and leaning on his shoulder. "And I wish I could do any thing half so pretty."

While this conversation was going on, a blind boy entered, led by a girl of fairy beauty. Though eyes to the blind, her mental vision lent but a flickering light to her own steps. She guided him to a chair in a distant corner of the room, then seated herself on the floor beside him, and opening her apron, which was filled with flowers, she began weaving a garland. In this way she would sit for hours at her brother's feet, singing snatches of songs and

hymns, and extempore verses relating to some domestic event. When the garland was completed, she put it over his eyes, thinking that the fragrance might tempt him to open them, and look upon their beauty; at length, discouraged with her ill-success, she would break forth in a wailing tone,—"Ned don't love Jessie; poor, poor Jessie. And she tore away the beautiful children from their mother's arms, all for the love of you, Ned. Don't you hear the rose-bush and the honeysuckle weeping?—'Lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning in Ramah—weeping—because they are not—and will not be comforted.'" And she began to mourn over her imaginary cruelty to the flowers. Tears fell fast from Ned's garlanded eyes, at his sister's sad fate, and his utter incapacity to accede to her wish. "And are you sorry, too, for the poor mothers?" she asked, as she raised her head from his knee.

"Yes, sweet sister, and you shall take a message from me to comfort them." She began to sing as she held her ear close to her brother's lips—

"In my ear, in my ear,
That no one may hear—
The wind will not tarry
The message to carry—
But the swift humming bird."—

She stopped, and listened, then ran gayly into the garden, and in a moment returned with a beautiful butterfly. The blind boy raised his hand to remove the garland, and the thorns caught his hair. Swift as thought, Jessie, releasing her captive, flew to his assistance, removed the garland, flung it on the floor, and pressed her ruby lips to his lacerated temples.

"Oh!" exclaimed Charles, as he for the first time observed the insect which had flown out of the window, "what a splendid butterfly has settled on that magnificent —"

Kate put her hand on his mouth. It was enough; the children had been schooled to avoid speaking of external beauty before the blind boy, and seldom forgot the lesson. Indeed, the deep shade of sadness that passed over his face at any inadvertence such as had just occurred, greatly aided their mother's injunctions.

At this moment a letter was handed to Mrs. Morton. She opened it, and as she read, her face became flushed. The children were standing at the window gazing after the butterfly; but Jessie's quick eye observed her emotion, and seizing Ned's large straw hat which lay beside him, she began fanning her with all her might. The children set up a shout, and Mrs. Morton, kissing Jessie affectionately, left the room.

CHAPTER II.

One word, my young readers, about the persons we have brought into your presence so unceremoniously, for we greatly like the friendly old fashion of introductions.

Mrs. Morton was Kate's own mother, but Charles, and Edward, and Jessie had lost their mother when they were very small; however, they never knew the want of care and affection, for Mrs. Morton had a large heart, and found room enough in it for the little motherless ones, as well as for her own, and only one.

A year after her marriage to their father, he astonished every one by suddenly disappearing. His wife was ignorant as others of the cause of this strange act. He had always been kind and attentive at home, and respected abroad. It was soon ascertained that his affairs were greatly

embarrassed, and, worse than this, that he was a *defaulter*.

Perhaps, my young readers, some of you are ignorant of the meaning of this word. I will tell you: it means one who fails to account for money intrusted to his care—a dishonest person; and I will also tell you how he possibly acquired his first lessons in dishonesty.

Have you never seen tender-hearted girls and boys do a sum for their indolent or stupid schoolmates, or slyly prompt them in reciting their lessons? They know it is wrong, but they think it is not *very* wrong, and that it will be a great service to their companions.

Beware, my well-meaning but mistaken little friends; many a man, and woman too, languishing in prison, are paying the penalty for the falsehoods—the *little* falsehoods they began to practise in childhood.

This was a terrible stroke to poor Mrs. Morton; but she had not only good principles and good feelings, but so elastic a temperament, that she floated on the waves of affliction instead of sinking beneath them. Her faith was clear, and strong.

Four fatherless children were to be provided for, so she must be father, as well as mother. After the lapse of some years, she had received a few lines from her husband, expressing affection and penitence; but since that, there had been a report that on his way home he had been lost. He had been so long lost to her, that the report affected her very little. She had no time for any sort of indulgence, not even of tears; so she toiled, and managed, and was a perfect sunbeam to her little helpless children. Even blind Ned enjoyed the brightness—her soft touch and gentle voice had always power to soothe him. Affliction, without there be counteracting causes, always strengthens the bond of union between parents and children. Little arms seem to cling more lovingly round the weeping mother, than the joyous one.

It is a common remark, that the blind are generally cheerful—poor Ned was an exception. He was gentle, and as helpful as he could be, feeling his way about, and requiring the least possible assistance; but when every body was too busy to read aloud, and he had played all his tunes on the accordion (oh! what a pleasure

a piano would have been to him !) he had nothing to do but sit and think, and sometimes weep. He had just begun to speak, when sickness deprived him of sight.

Poor little fellow ! it was pitiful to hear him say in his broken accents, "Oh, tate me out dis 'oom—it is so dart ;" and so in every room in which he was taken, he repeated the same request. He was intelligent, and when cheerful, quite amusing, for he remembered a great deal of poetry that had been read to him, and really knew more of history than many children who are much older, and have their sight.

Charles was impetuous, and self-willed ; but judicious and gentle management, added to his own good sense, had greatly subdued him. But poor, poor little Jessie—she was a care and perplexity, irremediable and hopeless.

"It was very strange," many of the neighbors thought, "that Mrs. Morton didn't put the troublesome child into some asylum—particularly, seeing she was only a step-child. Ned and Charley were enough for any step-mother to take care of; but it seemed as if Mrs. Morton set as much store by them, that wan't her flesh

and blood, as she did by Kate. It certainly was kine o' onnatral, and they were sure they never could feel so." Thanks to Providence, that the little unfortunates were not intrusted to their stony arms.

Kate, the youngest, was bright and affectionate, but foolishly sensitive. She was always fearing some evil might befall those she loved; and in her great anxiety she would sometimes waken her mother from a sound sleep, to discover if she were alive.

For a year past, the kind step-mother's heart had received another inmate; Willie Stratton, an orphan, the child of Mr. Morton's sister. He had gone of an errand, when we first introduced the little folks, and returned looking very warm and tired, just as Mrs. Morton had laid aside the letter which had excited her, and had taken up her sewing.

"Come, Willie dear, close by mother,—bring your little cricket, and sit down and rest your little weary self, before you go to study your lessons for to-morrow. You have done the errand very quick, and I see you are tired. And yet you look so bright and happy, that I know you have been a good boy.

"When I was a very little girl about your age —yes, just about your age, Willie, I learned some lines that I have never forgotten :

'To be good is to be happy. Angels
Are happier than men, because they're better.'"

"And I'll learn them too," said Willie. After a moment he continued: "Don't you think, mother, that Mr. Rivermeer must be very happy? You know how he found little George Little in the street without any clothes hardly,—and how he took him home, and sent him to school,—and every thing."

"Yes, I've no doubt he is very happy in having the will, as well as the ability, to serve his fellow-creatures. And while you are resting, my own precious Willie, I will tell you something about Mr. Rivermeer when he was a little boy.

"When he was a 'wee bit bairnie,' before he went to school, he used to take his little story-books, and read to a very old lady, who had no one to read to her. Dick's mother had taught him to read very distinctly. The old lady's son and daughter were earning bread for her to eat,

and could not spare time to amuse her, so she was always glad to see little Dick tottling in with his stories.

"One sultry day in August, in a small room overlooking a large garden full of flowers, sat the little boy reading to his old friend. The green shade over her eyes, showed that they were weak; and the manner in which she applied her ear close to the little boy's lips, proved that her hearing was impaired.

"The old lady and the little boy seemed to be alone, but the room was filled with invisible missionaries,"—(Willie looked eagerly into his mother's face)—"charming Zephyrs, who came through the open windows, laden with delicious odors, which they had stolen from the flowers. It was not a naughty theft, but one which their mother allowed them to commit. And among these unseen visitors, came a good fairy!"

"A fairy! a real fairy, mother?" exclaimed Willie, as he nestled closer to his mother, and fixed his eyes inquiringly into hers. Answering him with a smile and a kiss, she proceeded:—"Some think that the race of fairies has passed away, but I believe they are as numerous and

as busy now as ever, and quite as much disposed to reward good little boys and girls ; and that they even gambol as frequently as ever on the green grass, in the bright moonlight.

"But don't mention this to any one, Willie, for I may be attacked by those more learned in fairy lore, and I hate all sorts of battles.

"Now, the good fairy, who had slipped in among the invisibles, was glad to see the boy so benevolently employed, and she lured to his side the busy Zephyrs, and they fanned his glowing cheeks, and stirred the hair which lay matted on his forehead with perspiration ; but the boy heeded them not, he only thought of amusing his old friend, and he often stopped to explain words which he supposed she might not understand ; for little folks are apt to imagine that those who do not readily hear, cannot understand. The old lady would smile, and take his explanations kindly, and sometimes return the favor.

"'What shall I do,' thought the delighted fairy, 'to reward this kind little boy? If I touch his garden with my wand, and make his flowers grow ever so beautifully in a few weeks,

Autumn will pass this way, and in his surly humor, will destroy them all. If I lay a pretty little coat among his clothes, it will soon be worn out, and he will forget the act and its reward. I can whisper a word in the ear of good St. Nicholas, but it will be so long before he makes his distributing visits.' The good fairy was quite puzzled. At last a lucky thought crossed her mind. 'I will fasten in his memory this quiet scene, and the loving voice of his dear old friend, that when he is a man, and cares and sorrows crush him, and temptations lure him from the narrow way which leads to life, he may look back, and be comforted and restrained.'"

"And was that all the fairy said to herself, mother?" asked Willie, as his mother paused.

"Yes, I think that was enough, dear. And now if you are not tired listening, I will tell you some more true stories about Mr. Rivermeer's youth."

"Tired! no indeed, mamma. I think I should never be tired hearing about little Dick. It's so funny that such a tall gentleman should ever be called *little Dick*."

Willie's mother proceeded: "When Dick was older, he went to school, and some of the rough

boys (boys are very apt to be rough) took great pleasure in teasing him. He had been so much at home, that he was timid, and did not know how to take their rudeness. He had been taught never to retaliate, but to 'overcome evil with good.' That is, if any one did any thing to him that he did not like, to avoid doing a similar thing in return, and if an opportunity occurred, confer some kindness.

"One day, after Jo Jowls, the ringleader of the teasers, had been worrying gentle little Dick so that his fingers tingled to gather themselves up into a fist, and knock him down, he left school feeling very uncomfortable. He almost wished he might be a little sick the next day, that he might stay at home and be quiet. Poor child! he was irritated and unhappy. Whenever he brought his complaints to his mother, she always said, 'Wait, dear, till you have a chance to do him some kindness, and see what effect that will have.' This he had never yet done. Had he no opportunity? May-be he had, and may-be he had not the strength to do any thing so unpleasant.

"The day was rainy, and he raised his um-

brella—a pretty silk umbrella, which had just been presented to him as a birth-day present. Presently he heard steps behind him—pit pat, pit pat, and then he felt some one twitching the flaps of his coat; and at the same time heard some one saying: 'You are very grand, with your new umbrella!' Willie looked round, and saw his troublesome school-mate, Jo Jowls. 'Yes, very,' said Dick. 'Will you come under it? It's big enough for both.' Teasing Jo hung down his head, he did not even say 'thank you,' but he came under it very gladly.

"'Where do you live?' inquired Dick; after saying how much he wished that the rain wouldn't come till all the boys had got home, and how he wished there were no puddles for them to splash into every minute.

"'Oh, I live a good way off, and right round that corner I must turn down,' said the boy. 'Why, you'll get all wet, and spoil your clothes,' said Dick. 'Well, I can't help it, you know, if father won't buy me an umbrella, 'tisn't my fault.'

"'But I can help it, Jo!' said generous Dick, 'for I can go home with you.'

"Oh! it's too far," said the little tease; and I'm sure he must have felt very much ashamed by this time. "No, no, I'll get home before dark;—and father and mother always tell me to share what I have with others, so they will not be angry, I'm sure," said the forgiving boy, and he went home with his tormentor.

But never again had Dick reason to call him such a name; and never again did any of his schoolmates treat him as they had done.

"You remember reading, Willie, how 'the evil spirit' departed from Saul at the sound of David's harp, so the evil spirit which had annoyed poor Dick so long, fled from the sweet melody of his loving nature.

"You may be sure Dick was much pleased at such a victory, and began to understand what was meant by 'overcoming evil with good.'"

A few days after this, one of Dick's cousins gave him a great big beautiful kite; it was the largest kite Dick had ever seen, and certainly the most beautiful. Dick's parents never wished him to play in the street, and as their wish was his law, of course he never did. But this day he had permission to fly his kite before the

door ; he was very proud of it, and wanted to let the boys see it. One boy kept close to him, and asked a great many questions about it,—whether he would *swop* it away, and how many pennies he would take for it. Of course Dick would not part with it for any thing that the boy could offer, and he told him so.

In his eagerness to see his pretty plaything soaring up, up, up into the blue sky, he had forgotten his cap. His mother called him in, to get it, and he laid his kite on the door step, and when he returned, poor unfortunate little Dick ! it was gone ; and so was the boy that admired it. Heart-broken little Dick ! there was no use to look for it, and he did not know where the boy lived ; so he sat down and cried. Every body pitied the little fellow, and tried to soothe him, but he cried on—it was his first grief—his first loss. His father told him, it was much better to suffer for the loss of the kite, than to be the naughty boy who took it, and desired if ever he should see him, to let him know.

A week passed, and one morning as Dick and his father were standing by the front window, Dick spied the little thief bending down, and

looking into the gutter as if he had dropped something in it. As soon as his father saw him, he went to the hall door, opened it quietly, went up to the boy before he saw him, and said,—"Here, my boy, I want to see you." The boy looked up—he was frightened. "Come, come," he resumed, "just one minute." The boy followed him, he knew it was silly to refuse when the gentleman could take hold of him and make him go where he chose; but as soon as he was in the hall, he turned round. "Stay, stay, child," said the gentleman, laying his hand on his shoulder, and leading him to a small closet in the back of the house, and added, "I want to give you some twine. You have a kite now, and you'll want a long string." The boy took it as if he didn't know what he was doing. His cheeks looked as if he had been toasting them before a hot fire, and his eyelids were so cast down, that you could not have told whether his eyes were black, or blue, or gray. He walked as far as the door, before he had courage to speak. Then he said, and his voice trembled, "I'd rather—not—take it,—sir."

"Oh! yes, take it, child," said the gentle-

man, and opened the door for him, and shut it after him. Poor, miserable boy! If the gentleman had scolded him, or even whipped him, he would not have suffered so keenly.

The next day, as Dick was coming home from school, a boy met him—yes, the very same boy,—and put into his hands a kite, as large, and still handsomer than the lost one. All he said was, "Here's a kite for you," and ran off so fast that Dick could not see where he went; and I am very sure this was a lesson that the boy never forgot.

It seemed as if Dick was always meeting with some adventure worth mentioning. When he grew bigger, and went to a higher school, he was known as the good-natured, obliging boy, ever ready to take the part of the little or weak ones. He was very strong, so no one suspected him of being a coward when he refused to fight.

One warm spring day, when there was a holiday at school, his mother gave him a shilling, and told him he might go to his uncle's, a long way off, and spend the day. Just as he stepped into the car, which was empty, a colored woman

with a basket of clothes came in, and seated herself opposite to him. * Nothing could be neater than her clothes, or whiter than the cloth which covered her basket. Directly, a man entered, who eyed the passengers very sharply, and went to the farthest end of the car. Another, and another, and another person came in,—then a gruff, dirty-looking man entered; his coat was so greasy that it would have been dangerous (had it been night) to place it near the camphene lamp which lighted the car; and the first thing he did, as he seated himself close by a delicate lady with a velvet mantilla, and rich silk dress, was to spit on the clean straw which covered the floor.

"What's that nigger wench doin' here?" said the man, as he pulled the string. "I say, conductor, what do you have *sich critters* 'mong *decent* folks?"

"Come, good woman, it won't do!" said the conductor, and held his hand out for the money. An old man sitting next Dick, who trembled all over with palsy, said in so low a voice that

* Before any cars bore on their sides, "Colored people allowed in this car."

no one else heard him,—"Too bad, too bad; neither right nor reason,—neither right nor reason."

Dick was a very modest little boy, but he felt very sorry for the woman, and the old man's words encouraged him to say:—"Father says so too,—that there's no law to turn people out of the cars because they have a black skin, and that he'd rather sit by a clean black, than a dirty white."

"Abolitionist," muttered the gruff man.

"No, sir, my father is not an Abolitionist," replied Dick; "but he says there's no justice in it." He added, turning to the conductor, who stood waiting for his money, "will you please let her stay, sir?"

"No, no, child,—if there's no law, there's custom, and that's enough. I hadn't ought to let her in, but I kind o' felt sorry for her, seein' she looked so slender-like."

In her confusion, the poor woman had dropped her money among the straw. The passengers became impatient—she looked, and looked, and felt all round—it was no use. The conductor didn't believe she had any.

"Here, I'll pay for her," said Dick, and handed his shilling. The conductor returned him six cents. "No, sir, I am going too," he said, and followed the woman out of the car. The gruff, greasy man, said something that amused the others, and they all laughed.

Young folks, and I fear old ones too, are sometimes prevented from doing kind acts, because they dread ridicule. When people lose that dread, they have taken an important step in the right road.

The woman said nothing; she knew it would be no use, till she left the car. "If you tell me where you live, I'll pay you, Mister," she said to Dick, as she put down her load for a moment on the pavement. "Oh! no matter," said Dick, taking one side of her basket. "Let me help you carry it, for you don't look strong." "Well no, I've been sick, and this is the first washin I've done in a month, and the landlord, when he come in this mornin to git his rent, give me the shillin that I dropped in the car. He told me I wa'n't able to walk so far with sich a load, and he knowed they'd let me ride. But I don't want to take you out of your way, Mister, to help me,

for I've got a great way to go," and she raised her basket, and walked on. "Oh! I'm strong, and there's no school, and mother don't want me to-day, and so I'd like to help you," said kind-hearted little Dick. She thanked him, and thanked him again.

"I'm not much *disappinted*," she said, "for a friend of mine tried it last week. Oh! poor Sylvie, she'd bad luck, she had." "How?" asked Dick. "Why, you see Sylvie had a little child at the asylum, out of town, and word came to her that it was sick, very sick, and she must come out right away. This was on a Tuesday, and the next visitin day was Friday; so she hurried and scurried, and got ready. It rained and blowed, and wa'n't fit for a dog to be out, so the lady she lived with give her money to pay her fare, and told her that nobody could 'fuse her a passage at sich a time. But they did; she cried, and told 'em jist how it was, but they wouldn't let her in, and 'fore the next Friday her little Sal was dead."

"Dick felt very much as he did at school, when he was so much smaller, and his fingers wanted to gather themselves up into a hard fist.

On, and on they went. The sun was shining splendidly when Dick left home, but by the time they had reached the place where the clothes belonged, the big black clouds, which had been gathering for some time, fell in a most refreshing April shower ; and Dick, after bidding the woman good-bye, and telling her what a pleasant walk he had had, and begging her not to thank him so much, ran towards home. He had spent all his money, and had a long way to run, and when he reached home, he was soaked through, and very tired, but I'm sure he slept sounder, yes, a great deal sounder, than if he had played all day in his uncle's beautiful garden, or amused himself, while it rained, in his cousin's spacious playroom, and had neglected to obey that affectionate injunction, "Bear ye one another's burdens."

It seemed as if Dick was doomed to be turned out of his way by unexpected circumstances. The very next morning, as he was going to school, he saw three little boys—(one of them a scholar, who had been kept at home for a week)—worrying a poor, half-starved cat. They had picked up an old kettle in the street, and were tying it to the creature's tail. Dick beg-

ged and begged the cruel boys to give up their wicked sport, but it was no use; so, as she ran wildly up and down, and round, turning her head, and trying to free herself from this painful encumbrance, he caught her, took out his pen-knife, cut the string, and away flew the liberated and delighted pussy. Alas! in stooping down, he had burst both the knees of his pantaloons. The naughty boys set up a loud shout, as he turned homeward;—he could not go to school.

His mother was frightened when she saw him, but when he told her what had happened, she hugged him and kissed him, and called him her own precious darling.

It was very late when he reached school, and the teacher looked very angry. Dick knew that boys were often feruled, and if he had thought of it, he would have asked his mother to write an excuse for him.

He was called up to the desk. He trembled, for he did not like pain any better than boys who would have broken the law of kindness, rather than a law of the school; but he knew that the pain of his hand would not be so great as the pain of his conscience, if he had left the

poor cat to suffer. So he tried to be as quiet as he could.

"Have you an excuse, sir?"

"No, sir."

"What has detained you?"

Dick blushed, and hesitated. Silly little fellow! he was afraid that the boys would titter, and call him pussy's champion; and he did not think the teacher would consider it a sufficient excuse for his absence. And, generous little fellow, just as he had made up his mind to try the effect of telling the truth, he remembered that this would bring punishment on the boy when he returned to school, so he only answered: —"I couldn't help it, sir."

"Then, if you had rather have this, than speak the truth, hold out your hand. There," he added, as he gave him two strokes, "that's for being late, and this is for refusing to tell the truth," and he gave him two more.

Dick did not cry, but he felt that he had been treated unjustly, and his fingers had the same feeling which they always had, when he saw injustice of any sort. It was the first time that he had ever been punished at school, and the

boys loved him so much, that one word from him, would have raised a party in his favor.

Brave, generous, forbearing Dick ! he did not cry at school, but when he showed his poor welted hand to his mother, and she pressed him to her heart closer than ever—and he felt her tears on his cheek ;—and his father laid his hand tenderly on his head, and called him his noble boy, he cried as if he had lost father and mother too.

The next day, Dick's father wrote a note to the teacher, explaining every thing, and received an apology ; and the next morning, when Dick entered school, both teacher and scholars welcomed him ; and I do believe, the dreaded and cruel ferule was thrown into the fire ; at any rate, no boy in that school was ever again punished in that barbarous manner.

"And now, my precious," said Willie's mother, parting the curls on his forehead, and imprinting on it the sweetest kiss that loving mother could give, "you see, good boys make good men. And now run off, dear, and learn your lessons —"

"And then, mamma, may I sit up and hear

a story to-night?" asked little Willie, in an irresistibly coaxing tone.

"Yes, darling, you shall, though I think the little eyepeeps will shut up before it is finished."

"No, no, no, dear mamma," said he, as he ran off.

CHAPTER III.

Mrs. Morton was in the habit of reading to her children every evening, or listening to them, or joining them in some play.

In every thing she did, she had their welfare in view, so she always selected something to read which particularly suited the occasion.

When Charles and Kate were alone, he said very softly,—"What do you think, Kate, made mother look so, when she got that letter?"

"Oh! yes, when Jessie fanned her so hard," observed Kate.

"I should not have noticed it only for that. Who do you think sent it?"

"I don't know, but I suppose it was about business. I'll ask mamma some time or other."

"Oh! may-be you'd better not; but then I would like to know."

Just then Mrs. Morton entered.

"Come, mother dear, mayn't we have one of

those pretty stories you promised us, from that mysterious book. You know we played last night, and we would rather have a story to-night."

"*We* would, Kate!" "Yes, mother,—yes," said Charley and Ned together.

"Well, I will get the mysterious book, and I hope you will be able to apply the story I read."

Mrs. Morton took the book from her work-table drawer.

"Now, dear mamma, won't you let us see the inside of that book,—do, do, do!"

"Not yet, darling, wait till I'm ready."

The children had great curiosity about the book, for they saw it was not printed, but, though the drawer in which it was kept was unlocked, they would do nothing so mean as to take a sly peep.

With little Willie on a bench close beside her,—Charles drawing a picture for Jessie, who was wandering in the garden among the flowers, —Kate mending a pair of stockings, and Ned sitting quietly in a corner, Mrs. Morton began the story of

The Brothers; or, It's only His Way.

"I say it's too bad—it's always just so—and I wish, mother, you'd speak to Bob about it," said a little fellow, accompanying the words with a shower of tears—sorrowful, rather than angry tears.

"And what is *it* all about, my darling?" asked his mother, as she folded him in her arms, and kissed him affectionately.

"May-be Bob don't mean any harm, and I don't believe he does, mother, but he's always foremost. Just now Mrs. Penfold asked me to take a letter to the post-office, and said if I'd hurry before the mail closed, she'd give me an orange as big as my head; but before I could take it from her hand, Bob caught it, and said he'd go like a streak of lightning, and so he did, for I couldn't get up to him, though I ran till I could hardly breathe. And yesterday, when we were passing Mrs. Brown's, she said: 'Well, boys, which of you will fetch home the

cow? for poor Jack is too sick to go,' before I could speak, Bob was off. I didn't cry, though the tears came very near my eyes, but to-day I couldn't help it."

"I am very sorry, my dear Hal, that Robert has been so rough, but indeed I think you take it quite too seriously. You must remember how much your brother's promptness and energy benefited you the other day, when you were so nearly run over."

"Oh! yes, mother, I know it; and then last winter, when grandma broke her leg, how he ran off at night for the doctor, when I was afraid to go."

"Yes, but there was another little boy who sat and read to his grandmother, and handed her medicine, or drink, and was so long shut up in a sick room, that he was sent to the country to get a little color in his cheeks, and a little brightness in his eyes."

Harry blushed, and nestled closer to his mother's side.

"Don't you think, my dear boy," said she, as she drew him tenderly to her, "that it would be most ridiculous in the sweet little violet, which

we were admiring the other day, to quarrel with the noble oak that grew near it, because the little birds sought shelter in its branches, and weary travellers rested beneath its shade? Would you not call it a very silly little flower?"

"May-be I would, for I would rather have the sweet flower than the big tree. But, mother," said he, after a pause, "I'd rather *be* the noble oak, than the beautiful violet."

His mother looked serious.

"You think I am as silly as the little flower, mother, don't you?" said he, kissing her.

"I'll tell you what I do think, dear—that the storm would be much more apt to uproot the lofty tree than the lowly flower, and that, encircled as it is with fragrance and beauty, taken to our homes, and to our very hearts, it has no business to quarrel or complain. And that reminds me, my sweet violet, that you had better run to Mrs. Ryan's and finish the story you began yesterday to her mother; poor blind lady, she is always so glad to hear your voice."

Harry needed no urging to do a kind act, but, as he moved towards the door, he met Dinah coming into the room in great agitation, with a

spit in one hand, and a dishcloth in the other. Now, Dinah was too important a personage in the family, to be allowed to enter the reader's presence without a formal introduction. Although the breach of the good old fashion is more honored by some than its observance, we have no sympathy with such ridiculous innovations, and shall take the liberty of presenting our sable friend with all the courtesy which her worth merits. Take her hand, my little friend, and shake it heartily, for its hue is no type of her heart, which is as pure as any that beats beneath a white skin.

She belonged to that race of faithful domestics which is almost extinct, who have no interests, no hopes, no reminiscences unconnected with one family circle. She had no need of written recommendations, for she never left her first place, in which she had remained nearly half a century. Her judgment was so good, that questions of more importance than those of roasting and boiling, or even pie-making, were frequently submitted to her; and it was thought that Harry, her prime favorite, owed his life to the pertinacity with which she set up her views in opposition to the physician's.

For her devotion she had large returns of love and gratitude. The children brought to Mammy all their new toys to be admired, and all their old ones to be mended, and all their sugar plums to be divided, her share always being the largest; and this was often laid by carefully, till theirs were consumed, and then distributed among them. She could not fail to possess self-respect, for every one around her manifested that they considered character of more importance than color, and she never experienced the feeling which prompted one of her unfortunate race to exclaim in bitterness of spirit, "I wonder why de Almighty make us!"

Bearing the aforesaid insignias of office, Dinah burst forth:—"Laws a massy, missus, if yere aint a kettle of fish, sich as I nebber see'd afore. You know Jim Jonson, de boy what split de wood for you last week, what massa Harry helped pile it, kase it was late, well him's in de kitchen, mose kilt, and who you tink kill him?" As Dinah was easily excited, Mrs. Carlyle quietly answered, "I don't know, Dine, who did?"

"Ah missus, it's beyond a joke, he's bleedin' and crying, and says,—Laws a massy! yere he

comes, and you kin see wid your own eyes, and needn't be a 'sposin it was old Dine's foolishness."

The person announced by Dinah entered ; a dirty, ragged boy, with one hand laid over his brow, from which the blood trickled through his fingers, and mingled with his tears.

"Why, my poor fellow, what ails you ?" said Mrs. Carlyle, advancing towards him. The child blubbered out something about wagon, and Robert, and head ; but it was as difficult to get at his meaning, as to decipher Egyptian hieroglyphics.

"Did you say Robert fell down ?" asked Mrs. Carlyle, laying her hand on his head, soothingly. "No, I—I—I said he throwed me—down, he did, —against—against—against a wagon, and cut all my head—he did—and I'll be blamed if I don't—if I don't give it to him—so I will," and the boy burst into tears of indignation, rather than of physical suffering. After examining the wound, and binding it up very surgically, and opening the pores of his face by the judicious application of soap and water, in which Harry very kindly assisted, and giving him a basket of

provisions for his mother, Mrs. Carlyle sent him home, greatly mollified.

She preferred questioning Robert for particulars, as she knew he would not deceive her, to a chance of exciting the injured party by a recurrence to the unpleasant subject.

"I wish I knew just how it was, mother," said Harry. "We will soon know all about it, my dear. It certainly is very strange. I never knew Robert do such a thing before, but remember, Hal, to be silent when he comes ; I will do all the talking and fault-finding. It is strange, for Bob is not cruel." "No indeed, mother, only—" before he could finish the sentence, in came Robert, whistling. His glowing face and moist brow showing that he had been exercising.

"Where have you been, Robert ?" asked his mother, much more seriously than usual. "Why, what makes you look so sober, mother ? I've been to the Post-office to carry a letter for Mrs. Penfold : see what she gave me for going," and he drew from each pocket a fine, large orange. "Put your oranges back, my dear, and answer me one question. How came you to throw down little Jimmy Jonson ?" "Law, what a dar—"

"Robert, Robert, remember, no vulgarity; I only wish to know why you threw down Jimmy Jonson, and almost killed him?" "Almost killed him! no, I'm sure I didn't.—I'll tell you now just how it was. I was running, and there was a wagon in the way, and Jim stood close by it; I asked him to move out of the way, but he made a face at me, and said he wouldn't budge for the likes of me, so I just gave him a push, and ran on." "Did you not hear him cry?" "Yes, but I knew what a great cry-baby he is, and I didn't think it could hurt anybody to fall on the soft grass; I don't believe he's hurt, and I am not a bit sorry."

"You are quite mistaken, and I hope, my son, this will be a lesson for life. When you pushed Jimmy, he fell against the wagon, and cut his head; had the wound been one inch from the place it is, widow Jonson would now be childless, and you a murderer." Robert was horror-stricken, and his glowing cheeks became livid. In a subdued voice he asked, "How did you hear all this, mother?" "Jimmy has been here, and I have *seen*, as well as heard." Robert said nothing, but walked towards the door.

"Where are you going, Robert?" said his mother. "I am going to Jim Jonson's." "Oh! my dear brother," cried Harry, starting up and forgetting his mother's injunction. "Don't go, for Jim was very angry at you, and he said he'd give it to you, and may-be—may-be he'll kill you." And Harry was so excited that he began to cry. "I aint afraid, Hal, don't be a ba by," said Bob, and ran off.

When he came near the poor hovel in which Jimmy lived, he saw him sitting at the door. The glances which fell from his unbandaged eye bore no messages of peace, and starting up, and clenching his fist, he came up to Robert in a fierce attitude, exclaiming, "If I wouldn't give it to you, Mister, though you are stronger than me, if it wasn't for your mother and Harry; he's a gentleman, he is, and so is she too; and wouldn't throw a feller down 'case his mother wan't rich, so he wouldn't." "Don't be angry, Jim, I didn't mean to hurt you, I was in a hurry; if you'd only got out of my way, but you see if I'd only been a minute later at the Post-office, the letter wouldn't have gone, and Mrs. Penfold would have been very sorry, because she wants Ellen to come

home, and see her little brother Freddy before he dies."

Jim's aspect became less rigid.

Robert resumed: "Indeed, I am very sorry, Jim. Here is an orange for you, will you have it?" This was a peace-offering not to be rejected, and Jim's eyes grew larger and larger, until they seemed to be approaching the size of the delicious fruit on which they were fixed.

"Why, yes, I'll take it and thank you too, and I don't b'leve you did mean to hurt me now," said the poor boy, whose wrath had been removed by a "soft answer" and a kind act.

Harry was too anxious about his brother to go on his errand of mercy until he returned. "Here, Hal," said he, holding up his last orange, "is a present for you. I don't think I was very generous to, outrun you; but never mind, you shall share the reward without the labor." Harry thinking that he had another for himself, took it, saying, "I'm sure I'm very much obliged to you, Bob, and I am very glad he didn't hurt you. Did you see him?" "Oh yes, and we're first-rate friends now," said he, and in his deil-may-care manner walked out of the room.

In a few minutes Harry was at Mrs. Ryan's with his pretty story-book, full of charming pictures. I wish I could show them to all my little readers, but as I cannot, I will describe one of the prettiest.

At the door-step of a poor cottage, covered with flowering vines, and shaded by lofty trees, sits a little girl, asleep. Her flaxen curls have escaped from the net that confined them, and fall over her sun-burned neck as gracefully as if a fashionable hair-dresser had spent an hour twisting and torturing them according to the rules of art. A clean but ragged garment is lying in her lap; the needle and thread with which she has been mending it, are still in her fingers. You can almost imagine you see her nods, and hear her heavy breathings.

Beside her stands a figure with rainbow wings and gossamer dress. She is a good fairy, who helps those who love to assist others. She is touching the tatters with her wand, and when the weary child awakes from her refreshing sleep, how she will stare to find her troublesome work finished.

Now we will return to Harry. At Mrs.

Ryan's he found the old lady asleep, and Mrs. Ryan busily engaged trying to get down a carpet before she awoke. Ellen, the youngest child, about four years old, was hindering her by all sorts of childish mischief,—hiding the tacks or hammer, or rolling herself in an end of the carpet.

"The best thing you can do, Harry," said Mrs. Ryan, "is to take Nelly off into the garden. The child torments my life out, and I'm in such a hurry. There's your sun-bonnet, Nell. I know you are a good, careful little boy, Hal, and I'm never afraid to trust Nell with you. There, run along, and don't let me see you again till I want to."

The children ran off delightedly, Harry taking Nell's hand with a most elder-brotherly air. They went round the garden two or three times, then into the road. It was a beautiful afternoon, and the boy's harp-like nature responded to every thing around him. Not a wee blossom, nor a low twitter, nor a light breeze was unnoticed.

He recollected a walk he had taken with his mother a few days before, and went in search of it. It was about half a mile off, and there

were several fences to climb, which he got Nell over, or under, as he best could.

They reached the very spot — literally a bank of violets, interspersed with the fragile windflowers, and the delicate housitania. It sloped down gradually to a small stream—small, but deep enough to be an object of solicitude to all the anxious mothers around, for they all knew little Willie Cary, the widow's only child, who some years ago had fallen into it, and was drowned.

On the opposite side of the stream was a more precipitous slope, crowned with trees, and here and there a rose peeping from behind their trunks, like a ruddy, frolicsome child.

Harry, throwing himself on the ground, and taking from his pocket the story-book, which he was going to read to Nelly's grandmother, was soon forgetful of every thing around—the hum of insects—the song of birds—even little Nell. He had seen her seated beside him, picking flowers, and putting them in her hair; and she had even roused him occasionally to an expression of admiration, but he did not perceive her bounding away after a butterfly. No, he saw

nothing beyond the leaves of his book, nothing —until he heard a shrill cry, and, looking up, beheld his little charge, who had scrambled down the precipice to get a rose, clinging to a thorny shrub, while her feet dangled over the stream. There she hung, with the blood trickling from her fingers. Poor little Nell! cling fast to your rough friend, or Willie's grave will be yours.

Harry threw aside his book, and sprang up, but the dread that he could not reach the child before she lost her hold, seized him, and he fell down, uttering a loud scream. He tried to rise, but could not; and, as he turned his eyes fearfully towards the awful spot, he beheld some one unclasping her little lacerated fingers, and lifting her from her perilous position. He hid his face in his hands, and burst into tears, and the next moment heard himself addressed in no very soothing tones by his brother.

"Great cry-baby! to be sitting there boo-ooing, instead of taking care of Nelly. I'd be ashamed!"

There was no reply—no effort to move, and Robert's indignation waxed hotter. He seized his brother by the shoulder, and shook him. A

piercing cry—"Oh Robert! don't kill me—I can't get up," proved that there was some hidden cause for Harry's conduct.

Robert, though exceedingly destitute of gentleness, had no lack of kindness. He bent close down to his brother, and in a softened tone, asked for an explanation. All the answer he received was—"Oh! my leg—my leg! indeed I cant stand—Oh dear!—Oh dear!" The truth flashed upon Robert's mind, with a mixture of self-reproach. "Yes, yes, I know," said he—"you are hurt—keep still, and I'll run and get help. There, stand close to him, Nelly, but don't trouble him." "No, no, take her with you—may-be she'll stray away again, and you wouldn't be near to save her." "I only thought of leaving her for company, Hal, and of getting back to you quicker; but may-be you're right; come, Nell," and away they went. Fortunately he soon met a neighbor, to whom he intrusted the child, and then flew as if his feet were winged, to get the necessary help. He knew Jack Robinson had a hand-cart, and that he would willingly lend it to him. With not only the cart, but with Jack himself, and his sturdy son

Tom, he returned to the fatal spot, and with less difficulty than he feared, saw his brother laid upon the cart, on which the considerate owner had thrown a couple of horse blankets.

Poor suffering Hal was not so self-absorbed as to forget others. "Now, Bob," he said, as soon as he was ready to be moved, "run to mother, and tell her before she sees me, and tell her not to be frightened; I don't believe I shall die now —though I did at first, when I was all alone. Oh! dear, oh! dear."

Robert made no answer, but ran off as fast as possible, and long before the mournful cavalcade reached her door, the mother was prepared for the worst, and Robert was on his way for the Doctor. The Doctor found one of Harry's legs broken, but surprised the sufferer by adding, "by no means a *bad* fracture." He wondered much what a *bad* fracture could mean.

Robert begged so hard to stay in the room during the operation, that the Doctor allowed him to sit in a corner if he would promise to be perfectly quiet. Dinah, who was too much shocked at the sufferings of her little pet, to be as fussy as on less important occasions, stood by, bring-

ing or carrying for the Doctor, and only twice was she heard to exclaim—"Laws a many," and then so low, as to be unobserved by any one but missis. "Put my hand in yours, dear mother," said Harry, "and I know I shall not be afraid,' and the *coward* as his brother often called him, uttered not a single groan.

After the operation was over, and the Dr. gone, Robert stole up to the bed on which Harry lay, and kneeling beside it in a voice choked with emotion said—"Will you forgive me, Hal? I know I have been very cross, and rude, and you always were so——"

"Don't, Bob--don't talk of *my* forgiving *you*, when it was my carelessness that has done all this, and might have done worse. Poor Nelly—if it hadn't been for you, Bob. Oh! dear, dear, to think of it!" "Then, we'll forgive each other, Hal," said Robert, looking up cheerfully, and kissing his brother's hand, which lay on the bed. "So we will, Bob," said the patient sufferer, "and I'll always try to think when you are cross, that it's only your way."

"My dear children," said their mother, joining their hands, and pressing them together in hers,

"I wish you would henceforth remember Harry's words, 'it's only *his way*.' It seems to me that half the quarrels in the world might be prevented, if this were only kept in view. People are often disliked, and treated with contempt, not because they are wicked, but merely in consequence of some peculiarity. I presume you have not forgotten, how one of you used to run away when our good friend Mr. Bunn entered, because he winked his eyes, and raised his eyebrows grotesquely; and the other at sight of excellent Mrs. Jennings, because she made a queer motion with her nose, and had a squeaking voice."

"Oh! but we don't do so now, mother," interrupted Robert.

With a smile, Mrs. Carlyle resumed: "I wish you would remember, my children, that it is well for those who are providentially bound together by family ties, to try to keep their peculiarities from annoying each other. I do not think that either of you has the least idea that the other would tell a falsehood, or be guilty of any of those little mean tricks which deserve contempt. I believe, too, that there is no lack of love between you; yet scarcely a day passes, without a

scene which gives your mother a pretty hard touch of heart-ache. You, my dear Robert, may as reasonably expect Harry's nose to be as long as yours, as that he will ever possess as much energy as you. He has much less physical strength, but has just proved that he is not deficient in moral strength ; and, my sweet suffering child, try not to forget what you have just said, when your brother's manner troubles you, and then I am sure there will be less jarring than we have had of late."

There was no miracle wrought in the boys by this sad occurrence. Hal was still *gentle*, and Bob sometimes *rough*, but it seemed to open a new fountain of love in their hearts, a consecrated fountain, which invigorated and freshened all that was beautiful in their nature, leaving no room for pride or selfishness.

As soon as Mrs. Morton ended, Kate exclaimed, "Oh ! yes, mamma, it's only Charley's way I know, and I'll not be so silly as to cry again." "And I'm sure, you dear little sister, I'll never, I think I'll never be cross again," cried Charles, throwing down his pencil, and kissing her most unmercifully.

"Very good resolutions, and I hope you will keep them, darlings. If you like, I will read to you another story, as it is not late." "Yes, yes, yes," they all exclaimed, even little Willie, though his eyelids began to be a little heavy.

CHAPTER IV.

Old Tofe.

In some king or queen's reign, or president's term, an old woman lived—not "in a shoe" having "so many children she didn't know what to do," but in a very airy attic, with only one little grandchild, without whom she could not have *done* at all, for she was very infirm, and quite blind.

Besides the little grandchild, whose name was Moll, the old woman had a dog, almost as tall as the child, and much stronger.

Tofe was a dog of rare beauty and worth, and was scarcely less dear to the old woman than little loving Moll, for he had belonged to her only son, her dear dead Tofe, and had once saved his life.

Blind, tottering old grandmother! she was

not always so lonely, but husband and children were all gone now—all gone, that cared for her, except the child and the dog; Joseph, or, as his little, crooked-tongued sister called him, Tofe, was the last to leave her. He was a sailor, and in a dark stormy night fell from the high mast into the sea. His faithful dog was not near to save him, and the waves folded him in their arms, and bore him away from the bright sunlight, and the green earth, and his mother's pleasant smile. No one with a heart could wonder at the love that was lavished on the poor boy's namesake, and no one we hope without a heart, will read this story.

Poor, blind, tottering grandmother! what would have become of her, had it not been for Moll and Tofe! Moll the provider and Tofe the protector.

If I could tell you how the child gave up playthings, and playmates, to amuse her old friend, with reading to her all her pretty story-books, or how she went every morning into the garden to pick for her the sweetest flowers, and the ripest fruit, it would bring before your imagination very pleasing objects—books and fruit, and

flowers ; but alas ! Moll neither possessed books, nor the power of using them, if she had ; and as for a garden, she had never seen one, except by an occasional peep through a crevice in the fence. Then, there were no beautiful conservatories, which, though intended to attract rich purchasers, cannot exclude the glances of the poor from their refreshing loveliness. Blessings on every thing which innocently contributes to the enjoyment of the despised and the heavy laden !

Moll's talents were exercised in a different way. Every afternoon she went out with a basket, in which lay a cloth, ready to cover any broken victuals she might get from friendly cooks, who had no poor relations nor intimate friends to supply ; sometimes she would bring in nothing but a few crusts and bones ; but she was a managing little body, and would boil the bones, and throw the liquor over the crusts, and make a nice soft mess for grandmother, whose teeth were too feeble to chew any thing harder. Tofe took the bones ; but how *she* managed to keep from starving, poor little Moll ! it would be difficult to imagine.

One day, as she was coming up the kitchen

steps of a grand house, in a grand place, with her basket so well filled, that her cheeks were in a glow, and her eyes sparkled, a lady, who was very grandly dressed, and just alighting from a very grand carriage, noticed her. Moll was frightened when she saw the lady stare at her; and when she inquired her name and residence, she could hardly answer; but her heart beat so loud, it seemed to her the lady must hear it. "You are sure you are telling me right?" said this splendid vision, as the grand lady appeared to her. "Oh yes indeed, ma'am," stammered Moll; "if you'd come, ma'am, you'd find it just as I tell you, ma'am"—and then she stammered more, and blushed deeper at her impertinence, in supposing that such velvet, and feathers, and lace should come into their miserable garret. But they did come the very next day, and the wearer of them seemed very sorry for the old woman, and gave her some money, and told the child to come to her in a few days, and she should have a frock.

What a happy day for little Moll! she kissed her grandmother, and squeezed her so hard, that she told her her little arms seemed to be made

of iron, and to clasp her like a vice. And then she danced about, and laughed so loud, that Tofe considered it time to express his joy, and began jumping on her so vigorously, that he soon brought her down upon the floor. "Come, chick," said the old woman, "we'll have a treat. Take some of his money, and buy a drawing of tea, and a candle; we have not had a flicker in a good many nights, and it will be pleasant for you to see Tofe's shadow on the wall again." A low sigh, which Moll was too happy to hear, accompanied these words. Light and shadow were not for her—nothing but unbroken darkness.

What a tea-drinking they had that night—those frozen, famishing creatures!

Moll was punctual; she went on the day appointed to the great house, though her heart would beat, and her cheeks would glow, when she came into that appalling presence of velvet, and jewels, and lace; but again the wearer spoke graciously, and besides the frock, gave her a pair of warm stockings, and a cast-off bonnet, new, compared with her shabby hood. The child thanked her as well as she could, though she did not dare to say all she felt. "You must

find it very hard to get along," said the lady. "Pretty hard, ma'am." "I saw a dog going into your room the other day as I left it—is that your dog?" "It's granny's dog, ma'am." "Why, it's very strange, when you can hardly get enough to support yourselves, that you keep such a great dog as that. It must cost something to find him." "Oh no, ma'am; it doesn't cost any thing, ma'am. He only has a part of what I beg." "Morally wrong, child; begging is only one step above stealing; and to beg to support a useless dog!—dear me; it is not to be thought of at all." The tears came very near to little Moll's eyes, but she winked them down. Begging and stealing! her throat was full, she could not speak. The lady went on. "It is a noble creature—what's his name?" "Tofe, ma'am." "Tofe! what a poor unmeaning name! It should have been Nero, or Brutus, or Agamemnon, or even Bonaparte." The child knew no more what the lady meant than if she had spoken Hebrew; it sounded to her like gibberish, she said nothing, for she had nothing to say. The lady added: "You tell your grandmother that I want a dog for my son, and that I will give

her any sum she asks for it. It will be a mint of money to her."

The lady was a mother, and had a heart beating beneath her rich attire; and had the child told her that the dog had belonged to her dear, dead father, and that her grandmother loved it for his sake, things would have ended differently.

Poor Moll! the tears refused to be winked away any longer, but stood in her bright eyes, and then coursed each other down her burning cheeks. At last she forced out the words.—"Sell Tofe, ma'am, did you say! I don't think granny would, any more than she'd sell me." "Ah, ah, you don't want to part with your pet, hey? Poor folks have nothing to do with pets, child. I should never think of helping any one who keeps such unnecessary things. I'm going out of town in a few days, and I wish to take the dog with me. Tell your grandmother, and let me know what she says when you come to the kitchen to-morrow." How the little creature flew out of the house, as if her feet were winged, heeding neither the man with the monkey, nor the pictures in the shop windows—on she ran through

street, and alley, and up the stairs, to the *dear* miserable garret. No sound fell upon the old woman's ear so quick, as the patting of those little feet upon the old creaking staircase. As the door opened she held out her withered hand to welcome her grandchild. "Come, sit close to me, Moll, and tell me all about your luck." She sat down, and laid the bundle in the old woman's lap, but said nothing. "Ay, and stockings too," she said, feeling every article; "and what did the lady say, child?" Not a word did the child utter. "Why, chick, what's the matter? Is it you?" and she rubbed her hand inquiringly over the old hood, and passed it gently over Moll's features. "Oh yes, nobody else but my own darling—but what has come over you! Has the lady's goodness struck you dumb?" The child buried her face in the old woman's laps and sobbed loudly. Up sprang Tofe, who was lying quietly in a corner, and rubbed himself against her, and began to whine. She threw her arms about his neck, kissed him, and kissed him again—"Poor dear Tofe!" was all she could say. Poor, old, blind grandmother! What had happened she could not imagine. A superstí-

tious feeling came over her. If she could but see, nothing would be half so frightful as it was in her darkness.

The child soon began to think of her grandmother, as well as of Tofe, and with an arm round each, she repeated to the old woman what the lady had said.

Oh! it was pitiful to see the tears stream from those sightless balls.

"Then you won't sell Tofe, granny, even for a mint of money!" said the child, hugging each alternately, though she did not know what that meant. It seemed to her like a room full of bright gold pieces, the beautiful yellow pictures which she had always coveted so much.

"Joe's dog, child! sell Joe's dog! no, no, not if we were worse off than we are, though that could hardly be—cold, and hunger—and nakedness—but no, no, old friend, we wont eat you, if we starve," and the old woman's arms were thrown round the dog's neck as the child's had been, and she kissed him with full as much affection.

The child did not go to the great house the next day for broken victuals—nor ever again;

and the lady placed this among the many proofs of the improvidence and ingratitude of the poor. She was quite sure that there must be more seeming, than real suffering, and even thought it quite possible that bags of money might be hidden under the bundle of straw which served for a bed. She was not cruel, only ignorant, and inconsiderate. She did not know what a hoard of affection lay beneath those coarse and tattered garments. So the souls of each remained concealed from the other, by perishing externals—rags and riches.

"Poor little Moll! I wonder what became of her," said Ned, sighing deeply. "I suppose we shall never know," said Charley. "Perhaps we may," replied Mrs. Morton, smiling, "for if I am not greatly mistaken, there is something about Moll in the next story."

"Oh! that's fine, and will you read it now, mamma," said Kate. "No, no, not to-night, it is getting dark, and Willie is asleep, and Jessie must be taken to bed; so you must *imagine* what becomes of poor Moll."

"Oh! I think, somehow or other, the rich lady found her, and gave her money, and clothes,

and took care of the old grandmother, and may-be she had a good doctor, and he cured her blindness. That's the way I'd make it end," said Kate, "and I'd bring back the sailor." "But he was drowned, Ned," cried the girl. "No matter, I'd bring him to life again, and he should have money enough to make them all comfortable. Yes, that's what I'd do." "Well, Charlie, now for your ending," said Mrs. Morton. "As Mr. Bonner always tells us to keep probability in view in our compositions, I wouldn't bring Jo back after the waves had swallowed him up, but I wouldn't let the rich lady support Moll and her grandmother, because you say it's very mean to be supported by others ; so I'd either let the grand lady in lace and velvet, or some other kind lady or gentleman find them, and they should give them work—I mean Moll—and pay her well, so that she would be able to support herself, and her grandmother too." "I think that's quite as improbable as to bring Jo back to life ; I'm sure I don't know any body that would do such a kind thing, but mother, and she couldn't."

"Very much obliged to you, dear Ned, but you forget Mr. Ball, and Mr. Slade, and Mrs.

Perkins, and so many of our neighbors who are always ready to do kind acts. But you must settle the question, darlings, to suit yourselves, while I settle these little ones in their beds."

"I know what I'll do," said Kate, "I'll certainly go down some day, and ask the little beggar girl that comes to Bridget for cold victuals, if she wouldn't like to learn to read. I think she must look like Moll."

"Take care," said Ned, laughing, "that you don't frighten her away." "With your velvet and lace," cried Charley, joining in the laugh, in which they were heartily accompanied by Kate.

Several evenings passed, before the story could be finished; unexpected visitors came, and then Willie's birthday was to be celebrated by a gathering of little folks.

CHAPTER V.

A CHILD'S party! the most beautiful thing in our cold, conventional life. What a vision of innocence and loveliness—beaming eyes, ruddy cheeks, clustering ringlets, graceful movements, and the most musical of sounds — childhood's unchecked, joyous laughter. Merry little creatures! sorrow leaves no footprints on their bounding hearts; no bud of hope is blighted by her breath; no tendril of affection broken by her touch. Tears they have, but they leave no channels on those smooth, round, rosy cheeks.

Among the sports, the most amusing was the chance-bag. It was made of tissue paper, filled with sugar plums, and suspended over the parlor door. Each child in turn took a stick, and with closed eyes made a thrust at it. Three hits were allowed. It was very funny to see

them striking, here, and there, and every where, but the right place; and one might almost imagine, that the bag was silently laughing at their vain attempts to demolish it. See with what hasty strides that determined-looking boy strikes, as if his will must insure success—once —twice—thrice—it is no use, he throws down the stick, disappointed and mortified.

Then approaches another, who is evidently resolved to profit by experience. He steps slowly, planting his foot in the right place as he thinks; after moving a little more to the left,—strikes cautiously—changes his position—strikes again —changes his position, and again strikes, but with all his care he has failed.

Next comes a timid, little fairy-like being, who seems nearer heaven than earth. That is Alice Gray, widow Gray's only child. She has a disease that the Doctor says is incurable, and that she may die suddenly. How would her unearthly beauty fix the eye of an artist, were he painting an angel. She tries, because it is her turn, and the stick is put into her hands, not because she has the least desire of succeeding. She shakes back her long golden tresses, as if

she thought they obstructed her vision. She fails, of course, but she is not disappointed, for she hoped nothing.

Another and another tries; at length one with no more energy, nor wisdom, nor courage, succeeds—the bag is broken—the contents fall in a shower of sugar hail, and the spectators scamper.

Never was little fellow happier than Willie, caressed by every body, and feeling so large in his new suit of pink gingham.

And where was blind Ned in this merry group? Not neglected, I assure you, my kind, considerate inquirer. Several of the girls and boys sat by him, and sang to him, or told him stories, or listened to his songs, for he could sing very sweetly. He was not left alone a moment.

Emily Preston was playing a tune for him, when her mother came in, and motioned her to leave the room; she wished her to take a part in the chance-bag, and sitting down beside him, stroked the kitten which he held in his lap—"Is this your pet, Ned?"

"No, it's Jessie's, but it often makes me a

visit. I wish it was a dog. I don't much like cats."

"Oh, I think pussies are much abused. Some of them seem to me as faithful as a dog. Do you remember our big cat which jumped in your lap the last time you came to see me?"

"Oh, yes! she is a noble creature."

"Well, if you like, I will read to you her history; Mr. Preston wrote it to please Phil, and I brought it with me thinking that it might amuse you here; I left it up stairs with my bonnet, and I will get it."

In a few minutes Mrs. Preston returned, and seating herself beside Ned, read the history of

Marietta and her Cat.

It was a dark, dreary, gusty, Autumn night. Marietta was seated sadly beside her sick mother. She thought only of the lonely future, unblessed either by parents', brothers', or sisters' smile. Could her sunken eye have seen the starless sky, and her ear have caught the low moanings of the melancholy wind, she might have fancied

that Nature, at least, was sympathizing with her sorrow; but her heart-dreariness was too deep to suffer her to notice the outward.

"Etta, Etta," said the old woman feebly, "don't you hear that cry? Some one has left the poor thing to perish. Go save it, deary."

Marietta roused herself, went to the window, and listened. Yes, it certainly was the voice of one in distress. She threw around her the old woman's cloak, which hung behind the door, and went in search of the sufferer.

The moon seemed to be playing bo-peep with two or three timid-looking stars, that kept close under the wings of a cloud, so that they might pop under it at any moment.

Marietta soon found that the cry proceeded from a vacant lot opposite. She went into it, calling in the sweetest voice—"Pussy, Pussy, Pussy." Any one might have been willing to be in some peril, to have had such sweet tones addressed to him. At length she came to a heap of stones—out peeped the moon from behind her dark veil, and Marietta saw a tiny cat, almost covered with stones.

Whether it had crouched down for protection

from its more stony-hearted persecutors, or had been embedded there by them, must remain, like many other important subjects, a matter of doubt.

Kind Marietta was not long in extricating the poor little animal. She held it close to her bosom, and spoke as lovingly to it as if it had been a little human sufferer. When she returned to the room her mother was sleeping—she placed herself quietly in her accustomed seat, with the little rescued one in her lap, and when her mother awoke, her eyes fell upon the new inmate.

"Why, how strange," she said; "I was just dreaming of a cat that some cruel boys had deserted, and that you had saved the poor creature's life—Wasn't it odd, Etta?"

Sleeping and waking thoughts had mingled in her mind, and as she could not disentangle them, they became mystical.

Before the next night, the sick bed had become the bed of death. Wretched, wretched Marietta! we will not attempt to describe her sorrow. Look which way she would, there was no one to care for her, no one to love her beyond

the common kindliness, which so often sheds an unexpected light on the path of the desolate.

It is a sad thing to see any one sit apart like a Periah,* in this world so rich in loving hearts, and beautiful relations—and poor Marietta had a heart brimful of warm and generous feelings, ready to respond to the slightest touch of kindness. Her nature was too sunny to be chilled, even by the shadows that surrounded her; and through their darkness its rays would pierce, and brighten and beautify her sterile destiny.

It was very strange, her neighbors would say, that Marietta was always so pleasant and *chipper*. If *they* were as much alone, they were sure they would have the blues. But she kept such a sombre tint for herself; for others she had nothing but *couleur de rose*.

Marietta was very poor, and had no means of support but her two little hands, assisted by her bright little steel friend. Day after day, and often much of the night, this faithful trio labored to keep one little body from starvation.

* We do not avoid, occasionally, using words unfamiliar to some of our young readers, as we know they can discover their meaning by taking a little trouble, and thereby add to their store of knowledge.

But toil was by no means the most wearisome part of her lot; solitariness crushed her young and buoyant spirit; she would have deemed any fate, blessed with family ties, less unfortunate. She had once two sisters and a brother; and though they died while she was very young, she remembered their merry faces and playful tricks, and every year deepened her regret for their loss.

"Poor simple Marietta!" some one may exclaim, who thinks only of averted glances and unkind words too often falling from fraternal eyes and lips; but she would have been a more simple Marietta had she not been willing to endure the shadows, for the sake of the light which ever accompanies them.

However, we must not forget one gleam that flickered faintly over her loneliness. Pussy, whose life her dear mother had preserved, was now her only inmate; almost her only friend. She certainly had none more faithful or constant. Early every morning, sometimes earlier than she wished to rise, Pussy was at her door, requesting admittance, and then she purred such a pleasant good-morning, that Marietta must take her up and fondle her, and I do believe,

sometimes kiss her. If ever brute deserved such human love, surely she did. And when Marietta was sewing, nothing would quiet the creature but to be taken upon her mistress's lap, or laid on some article of her clothing, and then she was so frolicksome, springing after every thing that moved near her, and when she saw nothing else, jumping after her own tail, that Marietta called her Gambol.

When she was left alone, there was such a going to and fro, and moaning, that one could not help pitying her.

But the other inmates (and the house was not sparsely populated) did not like her. Some wondered what any body could see in her to pet. She wasn't at all a *likely* cat. Others were sure that she was somehow connected with old Nick, her eyes were so green, and her hair so black,—they did not see how soft it was, and they quite overlooked her delicate velvet paws. After all, it must be conceded that no boast could be made of external beauty, but for all the highest virtues, what cat could compare with Marietta's favorite ? so thought her mistress.

One day that Marietta had been out, on her

return she was met at the door by a little boy, crying bitterly. "Why, Georgy, what ails you, child?" she said in a sympathizing tone. "It's dead—it is—and I begged mammy to give it to me—and she killed it, she did—oh, oh, oh!" and the child sobbed louder than ever. "What's dead, dear? What's dead? tell me, do!" she said, drawing the child towards her. "Why, the little kitten—mammy drowned it—she did!" said the child, making a handkerchief of his hands, to wipe his eyes.

The whole thing was soon explained by mammy, who asserted that she would not be plagued with any more cats—that the old black *sarpent* was plague enough, and that she had drowned her kitten as soon as she had discovered its birth.

Though not pleased at having her property disposed of so unceremoniously, Marietta could not regret being relieved from additional care; but making no response to the executioner, she assuaged the child's grief by giving him an apple which had just been presented to her by a lady to whom she had taken home work.

When she reached her room door, there sat

poor childless puss, crying piteously. It was different from any thing she had yet heard. She would jump on her lap, then down—walk towards the door, uttering the most melancholy sounds. Sometimes it really seemed as if she uttered words. Busy as Marietta was, she would lay aside her work, and follow Pussy down to the cellar. Sadder and sadder were her moanings, and more and more like human speech. "Cruel! cruel! cruel! Give it me! Give it me! Give it me!" Marietta was almost sure she heard. When she left the cellar and went up stairs, Puss would follow her like a dog. This was repeated many times the first day; after that the disconsolate little creature would lie in her mistress's lap, resisting every effort to put her down. She had evidently adopted Marietta in place of her lost one. If any of my little readers could be told how much love this dumb creature inspired in the girl's heart, I do not think they would ever treat any poor pussies unkindly. Indeed, I'm sure they would not. She pitied it for its maternal sorrows, and for the contempt with which it was treated by every one,

and she loved it for its clinging affection to herself.

At length an event occurred in Marietta's life, which made it necessary that this poor semblance of human love, which had brightened her poverty-paved path, should be given up. An offer was made to the poor seamstress by a lady who employed her, to go to the country for the summer.

To leave the close suffocating atmosphere of her small apartment, into which a zephyr could scarcely elbow its way, and when it did, had so lost its purity and freshness that it never would have been recognized as the offspring of Astreas and Aurora—and to make acquaintance with trees and flowers—and to see the sun rise and set, with no intervening medium, and to smell the new-made hay, and to hear the songs of birds—sights and sounds which she had heard of, but never seen—Oh! it was no wonder that she forgot her dear wee bit of comfort; and not until it rubbed itself against her clothes, and purred a hearty welcome, did she remember its existence. A shadow passed over her rural anticipations. She took Pussy in her arms, went up to her room,

shut the door, and began to study a very perplexing problem.

To leave the poor creature wandering about the house to be kicked, and buffeted, and starved, was out of the question ; and this must certainly be her fate, for it must be confessed that she was not an able-bodied, useful cat, exerting herself for the destruction of rats and mice. Once indeed she was seen standing over a mouse in a very warlike posture, with claws in the animal, and gazing at it with a fierce look ; but it was strongly suspected that the mouse met its death in a trap, and that poor Puss was quite innocent of the murder ; and then she was more than suspected, by her enemies of course, of occasionally purloining a mutton-chop, or a beef-steak. No, it was folly to think of it. Puss must not stay there unprotected. She drew it closer, while tears fell fast upon its black coat.

"No, no," she said, gently, "Gam shall not be abused by any body—that she shan't. Etta must leave Gam, but she'll take good care of her."

Puss looked up in her face, as if she understood every word, and gave a satisfied purr.

What lucky thought had crossed Marietta's mind? and if lucky, why did her tears continue to fall so fast? Why did she sit stroking Puss, forgetful of her supper, or her sewing? She had formed the terrible resolution of taking the life of her loving friend, which had been saved by her dear mother, and who was dearer to her on that account, than any other cat could be. But how should she accomplish her desperate plan? George Rackett had a gun, but he might not be a good marksman—she would not trust him; no, she would undertake the deed herself.

Drowning was not to be thought of. Poison she supposed would be the least painful, so with a farewell caress she took leave of the unconscious object of her solicitude, and lay down to dream of horrors, such as might have visited the sleep of Brutus the night before the Ides of March. Had Marietta been familiar with the poets, she might have thus irreverently parodied Goldsmith:

When hungry pussies stoop to pilfer,
And get a cuff where'er they fly;
The only way t' escape starvation,
Kicks, and buffets, is—to die!

In five days Marietta was to be ready to leave her home. Day after day passed—day after day—her small wardrobe was arranged—even her small trunk packed, and still Gam mewed and purred as confidingly as ever. Every day, she had passed a druggist's shop, and every day till the last, her courage failed. Now the ominous package lay upon a shelf in her little pantry. Again and again she took it up, looked at it—shuddered—put it down again.

However, what was to be done, must be done speedily. She remembered seeing her mother butter a slice of bread, and shake the fatal powder over it, to destroy rats; so with eyes full of tears, so that she could hardly see what she was about, she prepared a dose for her dear, darling Gam, whom she saw through the open window, sportively chasing her shadow, and giving it many a spiteful tap, fancying it a substantial living playfellow.

> "The lamb thy riot dooms to bleed to-day,
> Had he thy reason, would he skip and play?"

A knock at the door called Marietta from her employment. A lady came to pay her for her work; kind inquiries, wishes, and farewells,

occupied some time, and when she returned to the pantry, no vestige of the bread was visible, and Pussy was walking about, and licking her lips in a most suspicious manner. To her mind the inference was obvious, and she threw herself on the floor, and burst into tears. She cried just as bitterly as if the cat had thwarted her designs, instead of accomplishing them.

Another knock roused her, and brushing away her tears as fast as she could, she opened the door to little Lizzy Field, who came to say that her mother would call for Marietta the next morning. The child looked so shocked, and so perplexed at Marietta's grief that she explained the cause of it.

"Oh Marietta, how could you? and you might have taken Gam with you, for mamma said, only this morning, that she wished we had a good mouser, to take to the country.

"Oh! dear, dear, I'm so sorry!" and the child wept as heartily as Marietta. Marietta might have told Lizzy that Gam's mousing qualities were not remarkable, but she had only one thought—her loving, playful friend must die—and she had killed her. Lizzy's tears were soon

over, and she began to speculate upon the probable length of time before the final catastrophe, and the possibility of her suspecting her enemy. Poor Marietta! the child's simple words increased her agony, and turning to her innocent tormentor, she said, with as much indifference as she could assume, "Come, Lizzy dear, the dark will catch you, if you don't run home quickly, and tell mamma that I will be all ready when she comes. Good-bye, Lizzy dear." And the child, kissing her affectionately, ran off.

It was a sad night for Marietta. She had kissed poor Gam for the last time, and put her out as usual, then went to bed to dream of past love and future loneliness. She had scarcely ever read any book but her mother's Bible and hymn book, so she did not dream that Gam exclaimed, as she turned her dying eyes upon her—"Et tu Brute!" But her mother's frown seemed to envelope her in darkness, and a low, plaintive moaning rang in her ears—once, and again. She awoke—listened—it was only fancy. At length a mew so real, so like the old-fashioned matin mew, roused her; it was repeated—louder and louder. She sprang from her bed—opened the

door—and beheld, spite of poison—her own faithful Gam! What antidote had she discovered? What magician had been at work while she slept? She took the apparition, as it seemed to her, in her arms, kissed it as if it had been a beautiful infant, and talked to it as if it were capable of understanding her. "Alive! alive! you dear darling precious pussy!" and she hugged her feline friend so hard, as to threaten the life she so greatly rejoiced at being saved.

After her joy had somewhat subsided, she began again to wonder at its mysterious escape. She went into the pantry, threw open the window-shutters, peeped into every corner, and behind a chest, discovered a hole. At the entrance were sundry very satisfactory witnesses, in the shape of crumbs. The mystery was divulged. A rat had dragged the delicious morsel into his hiding-place.

What a happy girl was Marietta, when she seated herself in the carriage, with Gambol on her lap, and saw the child who had wept over its fate the day before, shout and clap her hands in the ecstasy of delight.

Soon after Mrs. Preston began to read, Jessie entered with a wreath of flowers on her head, which some of the children had made for her. She seated herself on the floor at Mrs. Preston's feet, and looked up in her face very attentively for several minutes, then began to scrutinize her attire, counting every leaf in the pattern of the dress, and worked collar, and taking from her pocket a purse opened it, and began to count the money, then hearing a noise, in the next room, she bounded off, letting purse and money fall on the floor.

"I'm very much obliged to you, Mrs. Preston," said Ned, when the story was finished, "I think it's a very pretty story, though I don't exactly like poisoning poor puss. Do you, Mrs. Preston?"

"I should think it quite inexcusable dear, if the poor girl had not been half crazy with anxiety—she preferred suffering herself, to leaving Gam to suffer."

"Yes, I suppose so, and that was very kind, and very brave, but I'm glad that Gambol wasn't killed."

A rush of mad-caps interrupted the discus-

sion. Emily was going to play for them to dance. After a simple treat of cake, whose richness caused no mother to regret that Willie's birthday had been celebrated, and some delicious fruit from Mr. Preston's large garden, the merry group separated, heartily wishing that they could celebrate some other birthday the next evening.

CHAPTER VI.

"And now, dear mother," said Kate, as they were rising from the table the next evening, "I hope nothing will prevent you reading to us."

"I hope not, dear, and as it rains, I think we shall probably have no visitors," replied her mother. "You had better bring Jessie's slate and pencils," she added, "that we may not be interrupted ; and as it is so cool, perhaps Ned would like his knitting."

"Yes, Kate dear, bring it ; I shall not come to the narrowing to-night, so I will not trouble any body."

The good step-mother had taken much pains to teach her "dear unfortunates," as she called Ned and Jessie, every thing they were capable of learning.

Jessie had a talent for imitation, though her efforts always partook of the incoherence of her thoughts; and Ned had finished, with help in heel, toe, and ankle, more than one pair of stockings.

Surrounded by her little family, Mrs. Morton began to read—

The Broken-Hearted.

Little folks as they are going to school, sometimes peep down into the dark cellars, which in some parts of our prosperous city are numerous, but they can see little, except the darkness. There are two little ones now, bending over, and almost pitching down those steep steps, to gratify their curiosity.

Take my hand, little boy, your sister is too delicate, and too thinly clad to go with us, and we will dive into one of those subterranean dwellings. The door is ajar, but we must knock, we have no right to intrude even here. A figure opens it, that might have sat for the likeness of Famine or Despair, so wan, so hag-

gard, so woe-begone. In one corner of the room or den, is a child lying on some straw, or rags, it is not easy to determine which. The remains of two chairs, one without a back, and the other lacking a leg—a wooden chest, on which are deposited sundry pieces of cracked crockery, and two withered stalks, which probably were once flowering plants, constitute the furniture. There is an open fire-place with a few embers in it, but alas! the wind that rushes down the chimney, has more power to chill, than they to warm.

The woman does not seem intoxicated, but stupid—answers in monosyllables, and makes no effort to excite sympathy.

The child is very pale, but he sleeps, and has forgotten cold and hunger.

That damp, marshy floor, which never knew the genial pressure of a carpet, chills us, so come, my boy, and we will return to-morrow better prepared. By the tear in your eye, I know you will gladly break your money jug, and bring its contents to these poor wretches.

The morrow came—the money jug was broken, and the kind little boy with a bounding

heart, again sought the dark, dreary cellar, but alas! alas! it was deserted, and the wretched beings whom he was to make so happy with his little store, were gone—nor did he ever hear of what I shall now tell my young readers.

The father of that pale child, and the husband of that wan, haggard, woe-begone woman, was an honest, hard-working man; but he was a long while sick, and his wife could not earn much, while taking care of him and her baby, so almost every article of furniture and clothing was sold, or pawned, to procure him necessaries, while he lived, and to give him a decent burial when he died. His loss was a bitter grief to her, for she had nothing now in the wide world to cling to, or care for, but her little helpless child.

Soon these clouds parted, and in imagination, she saw her helpless child grow bigger and bigger—able to assist in earning his living—then a man, not only taking care of himself, but of her, when she was old and infirm. It was a blessed vision, for it shed a light upon her rugged path, and caused her to bear her heavy burden cheerfully. Those bright eyes were a revelation to the mother's heart of future greatness, and she

determined that her precious boy should not inherit her ignorance.

Thanks to our public schools and colleges, the poor man's thirst for knowledge may now be slaked "without money, and without price."

Year after year the hopeful mother toiled on. At the end of the sixth, the pestilence came, and all but the poverty-crippled fled from the city. They were left a prey for disease, or starvation. Their employers were all gone, and they could do nothing but fold their arms, and with trembling watch the giant strides, crushing one after another of their companions. While neighborhoods were depopulated, and scarcely a sound was heard in the streets, except the rumbling of the hearses, or the rattling of some physician's gig, driving madly on, as if trying to distance Death, small chance that he will succeed. Occasionally a poor wretch passes, screaming her withered, worthless berries, in so melancholy a tone, that it is evident her home is in some of the cholera haunts, and she is thinking of the little ones she has just left, and whose loving faces she may never again behold.

In a short time, not a living being but the

poor woman and her child remained in the aforetime *populous* house where she resided. One of those emphatically *Pest* houses, a disgrace to their owners, and the annoyance of every decent neighborhood where they happen to be located.

From a pleasant sunny upper room, the woman had descended to the comfortless cellar where we first saw her. Piece by piece of the few necessary articles which she had collected about her, was sold. Two beautiful geraniums, the ruins of which remained, one in a cracked pitcher, the other in a spoutless tea-pot, she could not sell. Who cared for beauty or fragrance at such a time? But they soon perished.

Day after day, to see one after another of their companions borne away to their last home, was enough to shake stronger frames than these poor famished ones—and first the boy, then his mother, was struck down—why they did not die, was beyond mortal ken.

At length the Dread and the Mystery of the world passed away, leaving every where its ineffaceable footprints. The depopulated city was again crowded and busy; the deserted house

again filled. There was abundance of work to be done, and a superabundance of hands to do it ; but alas ! our unfortunate friend was not among the number. She was not strong enough to work, nor even to seek her former employers, and solicit the aid she so much needed.

Employers would never lose sight of those who have served them faithfully, if they reflected on the vast amount of crime and misery which might be prevented by a little timely aid. It is curious to hear those who have recently extricated themselves from the clutch of Poverty, talk of the *Poor*, as if they were some rare specimen of humanity, as unlike themselves as the Esquimaux or the Hottentot. Short memories are a serious misfortune ; but all the rich are not troubled with this deficiency. Some remember so vividly their past struggles, that they are disposed to stretch out a helping hand to every one who is battling with adversity.

Every day, poor little Jemmie seemed to get weaker and weaker, and his mother had no increase of strength. They were merely kept alive by the kindness of their poor neighbors, and the

miserable bits of food which she crawled out, now and then, to beg.

One night as the little sufferer was lying with his eyes closed, and the very pallor of death upon his face, the dispensary doctor entered—"Ah! gone," he exclaimed. "Well!" and he turned to leave the house. "No, no, not well," cried the distracted mother as she clung to him. "He is not quite gone—oh, save him! save him!"

The doctor extricated himself from her grasp, shook his head ominously, and went out.

"Not quite gone," she repeated to herself, as she sat down beside him, and watched his faint breathing with such intensity, that her heart seemed to stand still. Fainter and fainter, slower and slower—a heavy sigh—a slight convulsive motion; fainter and fainter, slower and slower. "Quite gone, quite gone!" shrieked the mother, as she threw herself beside her icy-cold boy. How long she lay there motionless, no one knew—as her senses returned, she found her cheek pressed close to his icy lips—could it be a dream—or did they move very—very slightly? She placed her hand upon his heart—it was no dream—life was hovering round its beautiful

nest; what could she do to entice it to stay? Ah! a mother's love can work miracles, and in a short time, with the few means in her possession, warmth and animation were restored.

It is midnight, and still as the grave—who can be seeking admittance at such an hour?

The door is opened, and without speaking, a man enters, bearing a coffin. The woman was too familiar with such scenes not to understand the meaning of this. Motioning him with her hand from the child's bed, she said in a low voice. "He is not dead! for mercy's sake do not let him see that, or it might kill him!" The man laid down his appalling burden, walked towards the child, to assure himself that her words were true—turned away, and resumed his load, saying, "Well, it'll do for the gal, next door, what was took sick this arternoon." Then turning to her he said, "Why, you look like you were gittin' the sickness." "No, no, I've had it," said the poor creature; "but every body is gone or dead, and there's no work—and we're almost starving." The man was rough, but not cruel; he took from his pocket two or

three crackers, threw them on the table and went out.

Just in this condition were they, when we first saw them. That whole day she had been expecting a lady, who, one of the new inmates said, was coming to see her, and to bring some nice nourishing things.

The day ended as so many others had, in disappointment. The child lay in a disturbed sleep, waking often with melancholy moanings. At length he looked into her face, and exclaimed, in the saddest tones imaginable, "Oh! I had such a nice dream, such a nice piece of orange. Oh! I wish I had a piece!"

"You shall, you shall, my own darling," cried the wretched mother, embracing him tenderly.

"And may-be then I shall get well, and help you as I used to—oh! my tongue—my tongue, so dry," and the poor little fellow cried bitterly. "Lie still, darling," she said, covering him up as warmly as she could with the clothes he used to wear—"go to sleep again, and dream about the orange—and when you wake up you shall have it, dear. I'll be back before you have

finished your dream." She threw around her an old shawl, and darted into the street.

Her intention was to solicit charity from the first person she met ; but it was a dark, gusty night, and nobody was walking. She went on, and after a while, at some distance, saw a man approaching. He stopped suddenly before a street lamp, took a purse from his pocket, examined the contents, replaced it, and instead of coming towards her, as she expected, turned on his heel and retraced his steps. She had seen a paper fall from the purse, the wind blew it near her—she picked it up, it was a one dollar bill. By this time the owner was out of sight. In her bewilderment it seemed to her that this blessed relief must have fallen direct from heaven. A man ! why was not the being she had seen an angel ?

At the nearest grocery, she procured the promised orange and several other articles, and flew home. It seemed as if she moved on air, not on the hard pavement ; she had but one thought—her good fortune.

The little fellow was asleep when she entered the cellar, but soon awoke crying piteously—

"Oh my mouth is so dry — water — water." And then what an ecstasy he was in, when his mother squeezed into his parched mouth the delicious juice ; and then when he had some nice gruel with sugar in it, and saw his mother making a comfortable meal, he looked as if his prophecy might be fulfilled, that he would get well, and help her again.

Long after he had fallen into a quiet sleep, his faithful nurse sat beside him. The thought of her good fortune, which had kept possession of her mind for several hours, was giving place to another, less agreeable. The money had not been given to her, and had she tried she might perhaps have overtaken the owner. No person saw her pick it up, and there was no danger of detection ; but there was *One*, who knew it as well as she did—but did he not also know her great temptation, and would he not forgive her ? Her heart answered the question, and she fell asleep more peacefully than she had for many, many weary nights. In place of unsightly shapes, and painfully grotesque combinations, there were visions of hard labor and sabbath rest, gloom and sunshine ; but amidst all, one

face smiled upon her in loving trust. At one moment, a ray of mystic brightness streamed from between two dark clouds, then separated into prismatic hues forming a bow round *that* dear head—at another, an angel stood beside her, singing, and encouraging her—in a little while it left her side, and rose towards heaven, and then she saw that it had *that* dear face. Blessed ministry of dreams, that comes to the poor as well as the rich, and even when least attractive, draws the mind from painful realities, and amuses it with the vague and the fantastic.

Before little Jemmie's eyes were open, his watchful mother was preparing something for him to take as soon as he awoke. She was so busy, that she did not observe a knock at the door, and when she opened it, in walked the grocer with whom she had dealt the previous night, followed by a swarthy, gruff-looking man. "What's wanting?" asked the woman, surprised at so early a visit. "Wantin'," exclaimed the man—"why there ain't no great deal wantin' in money like, but a quite a considerable in honesty, and plain speakin'. I say what did you go for to give me that old bill, that war'nt

no bill at all? To be sure you didn't give it to me, but you give it to the boy, and that's the same. I guess it would puzzle any woman or man either, to pass such trick off on Joe Jonson." The woman looked bewildered. "I say," he added, taking his purse from his pocket, and pulling out a bill—"how many of them chaps have you got, missis? them bits o' deceit that go prowlin' round, ruinin' honest folks?" "Is that the bill I gave in your store last night?" asked the woman with the utmost simplicity. "If you don't recognize it, bring out some of its brethren, and may-be they will," said the fellow, with a sneer.

The truth slowly dawned upon the poor creature; the bill was a counterfeit! In the most straightforward and truthful manner, she gave the particulars of her finding the bill, of her own and her child's sickness—of their famishing condition—of her thinking this relief had been sent to save them from perishing. She might have addressed the pavement with as much effect as the listeners, who had determined, beforehand, not to believe one word she uttered.

"Come," said the gruff-looking man, who was

an officer, "it's no use talking—you must go where you will have to speak the truth." As he said this, he seized her roughly by the arm.

"Stay, stay," she cried, imploringly, "you cannot have the heart to take me away from my sick child—oh, I know you cannot. I'll give you all the change of the dollar, I haven't another cent in the world—but I'll work for money, to pay you the whole dollar—yes, two dollars—only"—"We *none* of us is the man," —"Oh, for the love of mercy wait till I go in the street, and beg somebody for the money, if they only see my poor sick boy, and hear"—"Hush up, hush up, I tell you we none of us is the man to be bribed, missis, to not do our dooty—so come along," said the office-holder. "Oh! if it wasn't for *him* I'd go with you, and no words about it. Yes, I'd go to them that wouldn't discredit me, as the likes of you, you cruel, hard-hearted monster. Oh, my Jemmie! my Jemmie, my poor sick Jemmie!" And tearing herself from the grasp of the man, she turned towards the object of all her care. He was still sleeping —quietly she threw herself beside him, and looking up, said in a low solemn tone, "God

bless you, my darling," then turning away, lest she should disturb him, wept bitterly.

One heart was moved ; and had it not been for the conviction of the important office he sustained, and the dignity of the laws he was bound to support, benevolence would have predominated, and justice been left to look after her own concerns.

"Come, good woman, come," he said in a less authoritative tone, "it is no use waiting, come." The heart-broken creature rose, threw the tattered shawl over her head, and silently yielded herself to her fate.

The grocer without one throb of compunction bent his steps homeward.

It was a cold, drizzly morning, and her poor rags were soon wet through, for she had no share of the umbrella which sheltered the official's person ; but her heart was too full of bitter thoughts to allow her to observe outward circumstances.

They had walked a long distance without exchanging a word, when as they were turning a corner a carriage passed them, and stopped before a moderate sized house. As they approached it

the hall-door opened, and a lady descended the steps and walked towards the carriage. In an instant the prisoner had broken from the officer's grasp and was at her feet.

"For the love of Heaven, lady, save him,—I know you will, for you look just as you used to!" "Who are you, my poor woman, and what do you wish?" asked the lady in the kindest manner. "Oh! my Jemmie, my poor sick child—save him—save him! You don't remember me, ma'am. You don't remember the little girl that had an old granny—and a dog, Tofe—you don't remember little Moll?" "Tofe, oh! yes, where is he?" said the lady, her eyes filling with tears. "Oh! he's dead, and granny is dead, and all are dead." "Yes, yes," mournfully ejaculated the lady, "all are dead." "But Jemmie isn't dead yet," said the woman; "but he will be if he wakes, and misses me, and gets frightened, and has a put-back." "He shall not die," said the lady emphatically, "if I can help it. But where are you going, my friend?" laying her hand kindly on her arm.

"Oh! she's going, madam, to be examined respecting the propagating of a counterfeit bill,

and p'rhaps the conniving at the manufacture of the aforesaid bill, and indeed, p'rhaps of divers others," said the official, in the most pompous manner imaginable, all the time holding his umbrella over the lady's head most obsequiously.

She was soon in possession of all necessary facts ; where Jemmie was to be found, and where his unfortunate mother was to be taken. Yes, it was the same vision that had passed before Moll's childish eyes, but divested of its appalling splendor. Feathers, and velvet, and lace had been substituted by the widow's garb. Time had made sad havoc with her early hopes ; one after another of the glorious lights which had illuminated her youthful home, had been extinguished ; but instead of gazing frantically upon the darkness and desolation, she threw herself into the thickest of the fight, and in succoring the wounded and the dying forgot *herself*.

Her last loss was the boy for whom she had wished to purchase Moll's old favorite, Tofe. While Genius was weaving for him a bright chaplet, Death came, and the flowers withered, and the brow grew cold.

The grand house, to whose kitchen little Moll

had so often been a visitor, was now converted into an asylum for poor children. Thither little Jemmie was soon brought, and cared for, as sedulously as if he were the lady's own child.

His mother found it less easy to substantiate her innocence, and regain her liberty, than she had expected. So many spurious bills were afloat, and there was such an excitement in the community, that no means were neglected to ferret out the counterfeiters. The woman's poverty was an argument against her, with the sagacious—a high reward had probably tempted her to enter into this branch of the business, passing counterfeit bills ; so the case could in no way be slurred over, it must take its course. Most fortunate was it for the poor creature, that she had chanced to meet one who could aid her at so trying a moment. The best legal advice was procured, and every day her kind friend visited her, and brought nourishing food, and encouraging words. Jemmie had slept well the night before, or had quite an appetite ; he was always "an affectionate, docile little creature, taking every thing the doctor left for him so well, and doing whatever he was required without the least

trouble to any body." Encouraging words, too, she spoke to the child ; his mother would be soon with him, and he should then have two mothers to love him, and to take care of him. A vision of other days passed before her, and her bereaved heart bled afresh.

Many important cases were on the calendar that term, and the one in which we are particularly interested was the last. At length its turn came. Examine, and cross-examine—bring all ingenious subtleties, and legal technicalities, to puzzle and confound ; that pale, wasted, trembling creature, who looks as if a feather's weight would crush her to the earth, falters not ; her testimony is clear, and consistent, and her eyes confirm the truth of what her lips utter. None but the mean and sinister, whose own experience forms their rule of judging others—doubt ; but such are sometimes found among jurors, and it is still uncertain whether she will escape imprisonment. Just as her examination closed, a person of reputation and influence stepped up to the judge, and requested to see the bill. "The very same," he exclaimed, as soon as it was handed to him : "and here is a mark which I

put upon it, when I discovered its character. It had been in my purse some time, and I was provoked, on looking for another paper, to find it, and without thinking, I threw it away." There was a buzz of satisfaction throughout the Court, and one heart beat almost to bursting with delight. Her poor boy, she would again clasp him to her heart, and every thing would go well now. She raised her eyes to Heaven, then buried her face in her hands, and burst into tears.

"Arrah, and it's well for the crathur ; she can go to the boy's buryin' now," said a man standing directly behind her. "And what boy," asked his companion. "Shure her own, that died this mornin' at a grand lady's house ; and they thought they'd keep Death off with their physics and delicacies, but the divil a bit he'd budge, the ould rascal."

There was a groan—a fall—and the mother's sufferings were over. She went not to her boy's burying, but she sought his innocent spirit, where earthly sorrow is unknown.

The children were much affected at poor Moll's fate ; and Jessie, who had crept softly up to Ned, and seated herself beside him, wept

sympathetically as she exclaimed, "who's dead, who's dead?—killed himself with a silver thread, Tommy Horner that sits on the corner, better dead—better dead. Yes, killed himself with a silver thread, *a silver thread!*" and she emphasized the last words, as if the absurdity of the expression struck her, and bursting into a loud laugh, ran out.

The children were glad, when she went, for her insane merriment grated on their feelings. Kate cried so bitterly, that her mother tried to comfort her by saying that it seemed to be only a fiction, intended to convey a moral lesson;—kindness and consideration for those who in the scale of society hold a lower position than ourselves, but who, according to God's estimate, might rise far above us.

"That makes me think, mother, of the lines you read to me the other day. I think I can repeat them," said Ned.

"Do dear," said Mrs. Morton affectionately, "and if you forget, I will prompt you."

"'Who made the heart, 'tis *He* alone
Decidedly can try us:
He knows each spring—"

"'Each chord,' dear." "Oh yes—

'He knows each chord, its various tone,
Each spring its various bias:
Then at the balance let's be mute,
We never can adjust it;
What's *done* we partly may compute,
But know not what's *resisted*."

"Yes, but you know, mamma," said Kate, earnestly, "that such a thing might happen, and that little beggar girl—" Charley began to laugh, and Kate stopped.

"What of the little beggar girl, dear?" asked Mrs. Morton.

"Why you know, mamma, that she might have no friends, nor no work, and might die broken-hearted, just like poor Moll."

"Well, we must take care of that, dear; at any rate, I don't think our finery will frighten her away."

At this the children all laughed, and Kate dried her tears. "And I'm sure we'd never deprive her of any of her pets," said Charley.

"And now children," said Mrs. Morton, "in order to remove this sad impression, I will read another short story. It is about a little girl,

who resembles in some particulars a dear little girl that I love very much."

"Kate! Kate!" exclaimed both the boys.

"Is the story about dear sister Kate, mamma?" inquired Willie, who had been sitting on a little bench close to her.

"Patience, dear, and you shall see." Mrs. Morton began: "Our own little Effie—"

"Oh! I thought it wasn't about Kate," said Willie in a disappointed tone.

Mrs. Morton smiled, and began to read the following story:—

Our own little Effie.

PERHAPS you have never heard of Effie Gray; but every one in our village knows her, and loves her too. She is never called simply Effie, but always, dear Effie, or sweet Effie—or our own little Ef', and these endearing names are always accompanied with a kiss, warm from the heart.

Would you like to know, little reader, what makes every one so fond of the child? I will

tell you. Not at all for her beauty, dear, for her nose is very clumsy, and her eyes rather small, and her mouth—but no, no one could find the least fault with that sweet little rosy mouth, dimpled with smiles, which looks as if it were just going to say the most loving things to every body. I wish I could tell you that her hair falls in rich golden ringlets over her neck; but it's not golden, nor raven, nor auburn, nor any poetical hue, but a sort of dingy drab; and as for curls, it would cost her mother too much of her precious time, to convert that stiff wiry hair into so graceful *dispensables;* so it is cut very close to her well-shaped head.

Don't pull my sleeve so hard, dear, and look so painfully earnest in my face; I *will* tell you why little Effie is so much a favorite. She is very good natured, and ready to oblige; never pouting, nor frowning, when she is asked to go up, or down stairs many times in succession. It must be confessed, that she does not always remember when she gets up stairs, or down, what she is sent for, but then she always takes reproof—and even scolding for her forgetfulness—pleasantly. Yes, Effie is, or *was* a very forget-

ful, or rather heedless little girl—for memory is so seldom employed by little folks, that she ought not to be blamed for their remissness. And besides this, she is on very good terms with that *thief of Time*, whose name is so often recorded in copy-books, and whom all my little readers must know, at least by reputation.

One morning after Effie had put on her clean sack, and her nicely starched sun-bonnet, her mother said to her—"Now, Effie dear, I want you to go straight to Mary Striker's, and give her this package before you go to school; and don't stop, and talk to the butterflies and the birds, nor don't look into every rose-cup, to see the footprints of the fairies that danced there last night—nor don't let the bright pebbles tempt you to pick them up for uncle John's cabinet. There's a darling; walk fast, and you'll be in time for school," and she gave the child a kiss, and a gentle push.

On went Effie. Soon a large butterfly, with the most brilliant purple wings, studded with gold, flew close to her face; for she had thrown back her sun-bonnet, that she might enjoy the fresh morning breeze. The insect seemed de-

termined to attract her attention, darting off, then resting on a rose-bush full of blossoms—then circling round and round her—at last lighting on her satchel, and then flying at a little distance before her. "No, no, I haven't time to run after you to-day," said little Effie very bravely; and though the roses looked so very tempting, she tried not to think of them, nor the fairies neither—but thoughts would come into her little mind, and when the clear flute tones of a wood thrush mingled with them, it seemed like fairy music; and she strayed mechanically into a locust grove, a little way from the road, and forgot the package in her pocket, and her mother's request; but she soon started from her pleasant day-dream, and ran out of the grove, and into the road, straight towards Mary Striker's. And though many bright pebbles shone up in her face, and she thought how pleased uncle John would be to have them, she passed on singing—

"No, pretty stones, I cannot stay—
To pick you up,—to-day, to-day—
I must my mother dear obey—
So do not, do not tempt me, pray."

Effie was very apt to convert every thing she had to say into rhyme; certainly, often in defiance of reason.

At length she came to a beautiful stream, edged with white pond lilies. She stooped down to examine them, and saw two little shoes floating on the water; and immediately a tiny child ran up to her crying bitterly, and saying, as she pointed to the shoes, "Oh, do get 'em for me, do get 'em!"

"Are they your shoes?" asked Effie, as she stooped down and laid her hand kindly on the child's arm.

"Yes, and mammy 'll lick me, if I lose 'em, she will," and more sadly the child cried.

"And how did you lose them?"

"I took 'em off to get the pretty white flowers, kase I didn't want 'em to be wet, and now they're all wet, and I put 'em on the bank, and they felled in—they did—oh! won't mammy be mad with me?" and she threw herself down on the grass in despair.

Effie felt very sorry for the little girl, and ran back to the locust grove, and broke off a branch, and when the child saw her coming, she shouted

and clapped her hands. Effie laid her satchel down carefully on the grass, then bent over the stream, and with the stick tried to reach one of the shoes ; great was the child's joy and her own too, when she succeeded in drawing it up.

The second, however, was not so easily recovered, for the motion which the water had received from the stick, sent it farther into the stream ; and as Effie soon found that she could not bring it back, she added more motion to the water, and at length it sailed over to the other side, and lodged among the lilies. Greater still was the joy of both children, when the last shoe was rescued from a watery grave, though they were not very fit for the little feet, that so eagerly went into them. Thanking, and kissing Effie again, and again, the child ran off.

This was an exciting event for Effie, and enough to occupy her mind for some time. She thought no more of Mary Striker, nor of the little package at the bottom of her pocket, but bent her steps toward school with as much rapidity as possible.

Indeed it was quite time then to be at school, and she only thought of dismissing from her

"Effie bent over the stream."—P. 128.

mind the little girl, and her shoes, and attending to her lessons.

Strange as it may seem, until the noon recess, her mother's message was forgotten. Then little Effie was in a sad state. She knew not what to do ; whether to go to her mother and confess her fault, or to go directly to Mary Striker's. This, she at length decided to do.

So she put on her sun-bonnet, and off she ran, heedless of the mid-day sun upon her head, and the burning sand to her feet. On, and on, and on she ran, with the speed of an arrow shot from a bow, but feeling as if her shoes were filled with lead, so poorly did her progress equal her desires. On, and on, and on she ran, feeling a vague dread that she should never reach the place ; she was accustomed to exercise, but not at such an hour, and under such excitement.

Run, little Effie, run ; though the sun's rays pierce through your bonnet and hair like darts ; —better have head ache than heart ache !

Run, little Effie, run—better that thy feet should be blistered by the burning sand, than thy cheeks with scalding tears, for neglect of duty !

On, and on, and on she ran, and at length reached the very spot—Mary Striker's poor dwelling—but the door was locked, and some miserable articles of furniture lay in the street, and beside them something moving about in the most singular way imaginable. To what genus it belonged, it was impossible to say. At first it was gathered up into a ball; then rags in the shape of legs and arms shot forth from the centre—then the ball was poised, first on one leg, and arm, then on the other; and as a *grand finale*, the whole mass was thrown up erect, and displayed "a thing of shreds and patches," the former outnumbering the latter.

The boy—for beneath rags, and dirt, gleamed out a link of the great chain of humanity—had been placed as guard over the ejected chattels; and now throwing back his shaggy locks, that fell like a curtain over his eyes, and collecting the drops which gushed from every pore of his unwashed face, on the sleeve of his ragged jacket, approached Effie, and silently questioned, by a very earnest stare, what she wanted.

"Where's Mary Striker?" she added.

"Well, I don't know jist—but she said she

was a goin' to find some place to go to; but I guess she'll find it kin' a hard, 'kase she aint no money, nor no credit too."

"Why what made her leave this house?" asked Effie.

"Why, kase she couldn't stay—the landlord tell'd her if she didn't pay him to-day, he wouldn't wait no longer. She said she was expectin' money, but it didn't come, and so he turned her out—that's how 'tis."

Yes, Effie saw all that she had done. The money was to pay the poor woman's rent, and if she had only done what she had been desired to do, the furniture would have been in its place, and the poor woman with it.

Tears generally came very readily to Effie's eyes, but she did not cry. Her head felt very hot, and very dizzy, and as if it would burst; and as she tried to think what she had better do, her thoughts seemed to be spinning round with her head. Poor little Effie! She could neither think, nor speak, nor move; so she fell down on the ground quite motionless.

The boy screamed to his mother, who instantly came from the next door, followed by the child

in those very shoes, which had been the innocent cause of all the trouble.

"Oh, mammy!" she exclaimed, as she looked at Effie, "she saved 'em, she did, this morning. Yes, she did."

"Saved what, child?"

"Saved my shoes—they would a been *drowned*—they would, if she hadn't got 'em."

The woman cast a sharp look at the child, but asked no further explanation. It was very evident that she was ignorant of the occurrence.

She raised Effie very carefully, carried her into her house, laid her on her bed, and tried to restore her to consciousness, but in vain. "Run Jim, for the doctor, and I'll keep an eye on the things. Run, child, run," said the woman, beginning to be greatly alarmed.

In a few minutes the doctor entered. "Poor little Effie!—Sun struck!" he said in a melancholy tone; "and how has this happened, good woman?" But the good woman knew nothing about it, and of course could say nothing. The kind doctor, who had known and loved Effie all her life, was rejoiced when he saw her eyes unclose, and her lips move; but when they opened,

he found that her thoughts were not yet exactly in their right places ; and had it not been very sad, it would have been very funny to listen to the queer things that little Effie uttered, as she tossed and tumbled feverishly on her bed, singing, and laughing, and crying alternately. After lying with her eyes closed a long time, she would sing,

"Little Willie Gray,
One fine summer day,
Ran off to the pond ;
There sat Mrs. Bond,
With her mouth full of onions,
And her apron full of rage ;

and her foot slipped, and down she fell—ha—ha—ha—down she fell all among the duckies that wouldn't come to be killed. Mrs. Bond ! no, it isn't Mrs. Bond, it's Effie Gray—didn't you ever hear of Effie Gray ? how her mother sent her with a pot of butter to her granny, and told her —Oh ! Mary Striker, don't look at me so, don't. What makes your eyes so big ? to see the butter —what makes your mouth so big ? to eat—oh ! take me away, take me away,"—and she would shriek as if she had seen some terrible monster ;

then she would shake with laughter, exclaiming, "See him, see him, how he stands on his hair, and points up to the sun with his feet, and makes mouths at it, it'll pay him—look, look, it's falling right upon his head, and how it will ache —ache—ache—"

The doctor gave her a soothing draught, stroked her aching head, laid his face affectionately beside hers, and breathed kind words in her ear. She soon fell into a quiet sleep, and then he went for her mother, and seated her beside little Effie, that when she opened her eyes they might rest upon her loving face. When she did wake, and felt her mother's warm kisses on her lips, tears fell fast, greatly to the doctor's joy.

A suitable conveyance was procured, and she was taken home, and soon began to recover. Several weeks, however, passed, before our own little Effie was the bright, merry creature she had been, previous to that morning, when her heedlessness cost her so much suffering; and not until she had done all she could for Mary Striker and seen her more comfortably situated than she was before, could she forgive herself. She had passed through a bitter experience, the dear

child; and I am very sure will profit by it, through her whole life.

"Oh, I was so afraid Effie would die, like Moll," said Charley.

"So was I," said Ned, "for after all, it does seem as if they were all real live folks." Kate said nothing for some time; she was thinking of some of her own thoughtless acts known only to herself and her mother, for Mrs. Morton never exposed her children's faults. They knew this, and never hesitated to reveal their inmost thoughts to her loving eyes.

"Well, mamma," at length she exclaimed, "that is a mysterious book. It seems to me something like that clairvoyant that Mrs. Preston was telling us about the other day. Won't you tell us, dear mamma—"

Her mother interrupted her, "I hope it will not make as many mistakes, Kate. You recollect that case, where the mother consulted her about her son, who was at sea; and she described his situation when the ship was wrecked, and he was clinging to a board; he floated nearer and nearer the shore, but the gale increased, and he was lost." "Yes," said Ned, interrupting his mother;

"oh excuse me," he cried. "Go on, dear," said his mother,—"and the woman was in great trouble, and went round begging of all her friends to assist her in getting mourning, and the next day, yes, the very next day, her son came home well. He had not been shipwrecked at all."

"Oh! yes, I remember. But won't you, mamma—"

"Kate, Kate, will you never learn to wait?"

"Mother's made a rhyme," said Willie, clapping his hands.

"Remember, sister," said Ned,

'They also serve who only stand and wait.'"

"Ned, dear," said his mother, affectionately smoothing his hair as she stood beside him, "I have not heard you recite that beautiful sonnet in some time. Do you recollect it?"

"Oh yes, indeed, every word; it seems as if it were written on my heart."

"Then let us have it, dear."

Ned began, and recited those touching lines by Milton, "On his blindness,"—as only one who felt them could.

"When I consider how my life is spent
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent, which is death to hide,
Lodg'd with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he, returning, chide;
Doth God exact day labor, light denied?
I fondly ask; but Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need
Either man's work, or his own gifts: who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best; his state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve, who only stand and wait."

Jessie had fallen asleep over her slate, but the rest gathered round Ned, and by the increased tenderness of their tones, and the gentle touch of their hands, and the warm pressure of Kate's lips, told him how dear he was to them all—doubly dear for his affliction.

CHAPTER VII.

When Mrs. Morton left the room with her young charges, Charley and Kate seated themselves at a table ; the former was studying his Latin, the latter mending Jessie's dress which she had torn among the briers. "Kate, it's no use trying to get this lesson," said the boy so abruptly, as he closed the book, that his sister started. "I've a plan in my head, and I can think of nothing else. By the by, Kate, have you ever discovered any thing about that letter ?"

"Oh ! yes, I know all about it. You recollect Miss Cramby, the lady that you said looked like a Turk, with that curious head-dress." "Oh ! no matter for her," exclaimed the impetuous boy leaving his chair, and crouching down close by his sister ; "tell me all about the letter, quick."

"Why, how strangely you act, Charley; wasn't I going to tell you all about it?"

"No, not if you travelled off to Miss Cramby. I don't want to hear about any thing else."

"As mother says, I think you must be a little *daft*, brother. That was a letter from Miss Cramby."

"Oh! that was all, eh?" exclaimed Charley, in a disappointed tone.

"Yes, she is going to Europe, and mother will lose two scholars."

"Oh, I see. Do you know, sister," and the boy lowered his voice to a whisper, "that I thought it might have been from *him*, or about him?"

"Why, don't you know that we heard he was dead?"

"Yes, but you know every one thought Mr. Tyle was dead, and afterwards he came home."

"Who did you say was dead?" inquired Ned, who had been sitting apart.

"I was talking about Mr. Tyle, brother, that came back after people said he was dead."

Ned felt his way back to his seat, repeating—

"Rumor is a pipe,
Blown by surmises, jealousies, conjectures;
And of so easy and so plain a stop,
That the blunt monster with unnumbered—no—uncounted heads,
The still-discordant moving—moving—waving multitude,
Can play upon it."

"Don't speak so loud, Mother Goose," said the boy, trying to assume a sprightly manner, and putting his fingers inquiringly into one of the slits that Kate was closing, and making it still longer.

"Why, Charley, what ails you? Don't you see you are ruining my work? Give me that naughty hand, and let me chastise it."

Charley drew away his hand, and laughed heartily, Kate joined, and Ned from mere sympathy. When their laughter had subsided, Charley said in a whisper,

"Now, Kate, be serious, I want to talk to you about my—" he hesitated, "about my plan."

"Oh! dear brother," exclaimed the girl laying down her work, and throwing her arm around his neck, "I won't be Goosey any longer, but if you say any thing very ridiculous, I may laugh, mayn't I? and then—"

"Now, sweet sis, will you please to listen to me, and not say one word, till I've finished."

"I'll try—go on," she said as she rested her head on his shoulder.

"You see, Kate," he began, "mother is losing scholars every day, and it must take a great deal of money to support us all. Ned and Jessie can do nothing. We are the only ones who can help, and you have as much as you can do, to take care of them; but I am no use, only a burden, and then if I go to college, think what an expense it will be, and mother seems determined on it. Oh no, no, I cannot be so selfish."

"But you know Philip's father—"

"Yes, yes, I know," interposed Charles, "that he will pay for me rather than Phil and I should be separated; but I hope mother has too much independence for that. I know she has. No Kate, it's too selfish, and I cannot submit to it any longer. If I had begun to earn my living as soon as little John Howe, you might have been kept at school longer."

"You know, Charley," exclaimed the girl, earnestly.—"Hush, hush! little precious Goosey," said he, laying his hand playfully on her lips, "I'm

the speaker. No, I'm determined not to be selfish any longer. You don't know how I blush when I read of the noble old Romans and Greeks, who were willing to sacrifice themselves for the benefit of others. Dear mother! she is a great deal more of a Roman than I am, with all my Latin, who am always reading about them, and admiring them. No, little deary, my mind's made up, as Mr. Schwartz says, 'Learning good, *moralish* better,' and it's not *moralish* for me to be idle, while mother is killing herself to earn. My mind's made up, darling, so—" at this instant the door opened, and Mr. Preston appeared. They had been too much engaged to hear him enter the street door. He brought with him, as usual, a basket of fruit, and flowers, and a letter from Phil to Charley. Phil was making his uncle a visit previous to entering college.

As Mr. Preston remained till bed time, the conversation was not resumed.

We must now leave the thread of our story, for a few minutes, and glance backwards. Mrs. Morton had always hoped that her children might remain ignorant of their father's conduct. But at school, and elsewhere, they were liable to hear

all, and probably more than the truth. Would it not be better to tell them herself? What a task for a wife and mother, to exhibit the crime in its true colors, and yet prevent contempt for the criminal. Her heart could make many excuses for the act, which had blighted all her prospects; but she feared to make an impression on their minds which might lessen their horror of dishonesty.

Day after day she postponed the dreaded task. What time should she select? In the morning it would unfit them for school; in the evening it would deprive them of sleep; day after day, brave as she had been in all her trials, she shrunk from the sight of her children's sufferings.

Ned was so constantly under her eye, that there was little danger of any thing coming to his ear. Jessie's pitiable state would screen her, and little cherub Kate, who looked as if Joy had thrown around her so bright and impenetrable an atmosphere, that sorrow's darts could never reach her; she was too young, to have so sad a picture presented to her laughing eyes: so, after all, it was only Charles to whom it was necessary to confide the secret. How long this would have

been postponed, it is impossible to say, had not an unexpected event occurred.

One day the boy rushed in from school with his face flushed, and his clothes muddy.

"Why, what have you been about, my son?" exclaimed his mother.

"Well, I couldn't help it—I couldn't—George Sims called my father names, and said he was a—" A flood of tears prevented his finishing the sentence. Charles so seldom wept that his mother was shocked, and after soothing him, she fulfilled the long-deferred duty. Yes, she told him all; and though she did not make that one shade less dark, she dwelt lovingly on the brightness which had preceded it; the long years of usefulness, and respectability, and affectionate care for his family. For several days smiles were rarely seen on the boy's generally beaming face, and when they returned, they were like the sickly light of a November day.

But Charles loved his mother too well to continue gloomy; he studied more diligently than ever, for he knew this would not only please her then, but would enable him to serve her better in future. And from this time he began

to feel what an important position he must fill in their little circle. But though he studied never so diligently, what a long time must elapse, before he could make his learning useful, in relieving his mother from the heavy burden of their support. She had always pleased herself with the idea, that he should be thoroughly educated, but after toiling, and suffering all sorts of privations, she began to tremble, lest the hopes she had cherished, and excited in her dear child, should be disappointed. The classes which the kind villagers had formed for her, at the beginning of her (worse than) widowhood, were becoming smaller and smaller by marriages, removals, and deaths.

Charles saw this, and it troubled him ; but though impetuous, he had sufficient self-possession to appear as usual before his mother. "Oh ! if I could only earn enough to pay the baker," he thought, "how glad I should be," but thinking, and wishing were of no avail, so he turned to his own little mother Goose, with his perplexities and his plans ; how he was interrupted, has been explained.

The next day Kate's constrained manner told

that something was the matter. Instead of asking questions, her judicious mother sought to employ her in interesting occupations, and in the evening brought out the story-book, which was always hailed with enthusiasm. "Come, children," she said, "sit down, and enjoy the story which I am going to read to you. I know it will interest you, Kate, as it will remind you of poor Mrs. Wilson, the milliner, who came to borrow money enough to pay her rent, because Mrs. Kline, our rich neighbor, could not pay her bill, as she had been purchasing a pair of magnificent silver waiters."

"Oh! yes, yes, mamma, I remember," said Kate. Mrs. Morton began the story of

Two Sketches from the Life School.

"The magnificence of one class will ever be attended by the degradation of another. The true greatness of any country, the real power and grandeur of our own, lies in the equal condition of its people, and in the practical recognition of those immutable doctrines of equality, truth, mercy, and justice, which form the essence of the teachings of our Saviour."—THEODORE SEDGWICK.

"Rather late to-day, Lizzy," said Mr. Howard,

as his little daughter came in from school. "What has detained you, my child?"

"Why, papa," said the child, laying down her books and her bonnet, and seating herself on her father's knee, "Maria Armstrong asked me to go home with her, and look at some beautiful paintings, and sculpture, which her cousin had just sent from Italy. He is spending some time there, and she says it would be very easy for any of his friends to send an order to him, and have exactly such pictures painted. She says she knows he would attend to it with pleasure. And I was thinking—oh! you don't know how splendid they are, papa—I was thinking, if you would only send an order, it would be so delightful to own such beautiful things."

"And what are the beautiful things that have so fascinated you, my dear?" asked her father, as he put back the long flaxen ringlets which shaded her glowing cheeks, and lovingly pressed his lips to each alternately, then to the ruby lips, again and again. There was no getting a word through such a shower of kisses; but Lizzy had no mind to have the subject kissed down, so after repeating several times, "Do, dear papa—stop, and let me tell you!" she was suffered to proceed.

"Only one *fascinated* me, papa, though there were a great many sweet landscapes, and a head of that poet you were speaking of the other day —Plutarch?—no, no, Petrarch—that's it—and that was the Persian Sibyl. The Cumean Sibyl was there too, and it was very noble, and very beautiful, but the other—oh! it was an angel, and it looked so like—indeed papa, I'm not mistaken," her voice trembled—"so like mamma."

She threw her arms round her father's neck, buried her face in his bosom, and burst into tears. The surprised father pressed her convulsively to his heart, and silently mingled his tears with hers. "Forgive me, dear papa, for grieving you so," said Lizzy after a few moments, as she brushed away her tears; "but if you could only see how splendid they are, I know you would like to have them." The child had regained composure sooner than her father. After a long pause he said, "Lizzy, dear, I have been for some time deeply interested in several pictures, so human, and lifelike, that I am sure you would admire them. After dinner, if you choose, I will take you to see some of them."

"Oh! yes, papa," cried Lizzy, "I shall be

very, very glad to go. And what are the subjects, papa ?"

"You shall try your skill at discovering them," answered her father.

Lizzy was ready early, and had arranged her dress carefully.

"Will you oblige me, my dear," said Mr. Howard, "by changing your bonnet for a plainer one ? It will form too striking a contrast with the drapery in some of the pictures."

Lizzy laughed as she said, "You surely are not turning Quaker, papa ?"

"No, Lizzy, dear ; although I think their plain attire must save them some trouble, and much envy."

The change was soon made, and they proceeded to the outskirts of the city. Lizzy was as buoyant as youth and health could make her.

> "E'en the slight harebell raised its head,
> Elastic from her airy tread,"

exclaimed Mr. Howard, as he tried to follow her eccentric movements.

"Indeed, it does seem to me, as if a very small pair of wings would raise me from the

earth," said the delighted girl, springing forward.

At length they reached a quiet, shady lane. On one side, a little brook wended its murmuring course, fringed with flowers, and shaded with elms and willows, whose graceful boughs seemed bending in silent worship to the all-pervading spirit of loveliness which had here made her home.

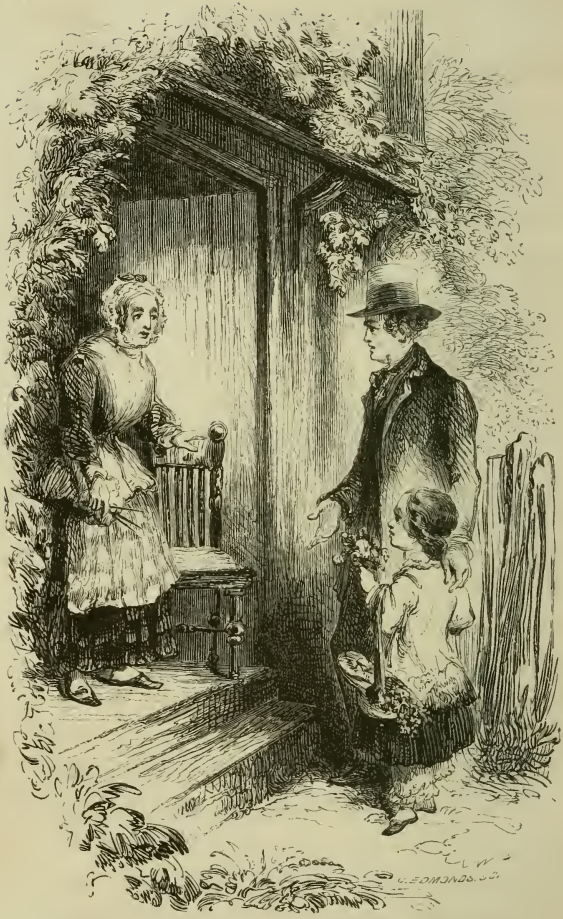
"What a sweet picture!" said Lizzy. "I wonder if this is the one you brought me here to see."

"No, there is a deficiency here which my pictures have not—human faces."

The birds seemed to have got up an oratorio, and to be in the midst of a grand chorus, each trying to sing louder than the other.

"Well, as there's no talking," exclaimed Lizzy, "I'll join in the singing;" and she sent forth a clear, birdlike note, as wild and merry as those she was imitating.

On the other side of the lane stood a dwelling, which, though really nothing but a rude hut, had been whitened with lime, and covered with flowering vines, and was now the prettiest box



"Ah! Maister Howard, and I'm vara glad to see ye."—P. 151.

imaginable. The honeysuckle and cypress vine twined round the door, like ministering angels, bearing fragrance and beauty to age and poverty.

The door was thrown open, and near it (though it would have been difficult to get at any great distance from it, and remain in the room) sat an old woman knitting. Her dress, though coarse, was exceedingly neat and clean. A black calico gown, a check apron, and a cap whose dazzling whiteness would have done honor to the Shakers.

Two chairs whose seats had been transformed from willow to wood; one deal table, which seemed to be in habits of closest intimacy with the scrubbing-brush, and a small bed, covered with a clean patchwork quilt, were the principal articles of furniture. "Ah! Maister Houard, and I'm vara glad to see ye," exclaimed the old lady, as she handed the two chairs, and betook herself to the bedside. Lizzy offered to stand, but was prevented from saying much by the remark, "And sit ye doun, miss, and dinna shame the auld woman's pauverty. And wha may be the young cannie veesitur ye ha braught wi' ye?" "My daughter Elizabeth, Mrs. Dun-

can, who is so delighted with your feathered friends, and sweet flowers, that I know not whether she will be disposed to leave them." "Ah! the sweet lassie," said she, taking the child's hand, "I doubt na when she becam accoustomed to the nauvelties, that she'd ken ther are ither things mair needfu', that wad na be sae plantifu', and ma'be ye dinna ken wha bro't me the beauty, sae pleasin' to your bright een?'

"I do not, indeed," said Lizzy, "but some one of taste I am sure."

"Aye, taste, and feelin', and—"

"But," interrupted Mr. Howard, "I think you sowed the seeds yourself, Mrs. Duncan."

"Yes, vara true, vara true; but if summun had na gien me tham, and tauld me what to do, I wad na had ony thing these lang simmer days to audmire." Her significant wink gave Lizzy to understand the name of *summun* as plainly as if it had been spoken.

"The old Inquisitor, Mrs. Duncan, how does he treat you now?" asked Mr. Howard. "Does he screw the rack as hard as ever?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Inqueesetor, indeed! Na, na, the leenament ye gied me loosened the screw, and

I can use my haunds ye see brawlie. Ye ha ben vara kine to me, but I wad na forgeet that thaugh ye gied the seed, and the meedicin, the Gude One gied the increase and the halin ; and gied ye the preevilege to bine up the brauken-hearted."

While the good woman went to her little closet to get a fine peach for Lizzy, which had been given her by some kind neighbor, the child whispered, " I think I begin to understand you, papa ; shall we see the picture here ? "

Mr. Howard smiled.

Though sorry to deprive Mrs. Duncan of what was a treat to her, Lizzy was afraid of wounding her feelings by a refusal ; so she took the fruit, and after thanking her, and taking a kind leave, they left the hut, and bent their steps homewards.

On the way Mr. Howard informed Lizzy, that some seven or eight months since, happening to pass the hut, he saw a funeral moving from it. Only four poor-looking persons followed, besides the old woman they had seen. Her bent form, and tottering steps, attracted his attention ; and on inquiry he found that she was following to the grave her only child, indeed her only relative.

He had been a journeyman carpenter; a sober, industrious lad, but for the last year sick, and incapable of working much. As long as he was able, he made flower frames, and light articles, which his mother sold; these, with her exertions, kept them from starving; but with all the old woman's industry, and prudence, she had not been able to keep out of debt, and the man who gave the information added, "What will become of the creature now, I can't see, for her strength is gone, and her heart is with her poor Jamie in his grave."

Mr. Howard hesitated, whether to wait for the old woman's return, and intrude upon her sorrows, or call the next morning with aid. He decided on the former, that her mind might be relieved from anticipations of an almshouse.

"Will you excuse my troubling you just now, Mrs. Duncan?" said he, as the poor creature tottered up to her desolate home.

"Na, na, I canna spak wid ony body noo. I canna fash mysel wid warldly cares," said she, motioning him away with her hand.

"No matter, Mrs. Duncan, I will call to-morrow," said Mr. Howard in a sympathizing tone.

"Na, na, ye ha a kindly luke,—cam in, cam in." As she entered the solitary room, and missed that pale face which she had watched so long, day and night, she felt as if the only star that lighted her evening sky, was set for ever. When the expression of her agony had somewhat subsided, she exclaimed, "Ah! woe, ah! woe, that I suld follow the sweet bairn to his grave in these gay hauppy claithes!"

Other garments more suited to her feelings were sent to her the next day, and the dwelling, which was in a most dilapidated state, was repaired, and made comfortable; and now in the long summer days she can earn something to relieve the burden of dependence.

"I dinna ken what wad a become o' the auld creetur, if Prauvidence had na sent ye!" exclaimed the grateful creature, a month after Jamie's funeral. "He would have employed some other messenger, Mrs. Duncan," was the answer.

"And how do you like my picture, Lizzy?" asked Mr. Howard.

"Oh very, very much," answered the animated child. "I don't think," added she, "that it is so beautiful as *mine*, but then the moral I

think is better. I suppose a picture can have a moral as well as a story, papa?"

"Certainly, my dear."

"Any more pictures, papa?"

"I had intended to show you another of the same school, but as business leads me in an opposite direction, you shall see one altogether different in design—drawing—coloring—every thing."

"And now for the second picture, Lizzy," said Mr. Howard, as he stopped before an immensely large edifice.

"Is this a private house?" inquired the child.

"It is, and you shall be introduced to its interior." Mr. Howard rang, and inquired for Mr. Meanly, and they were shown into the dining-room. Three other apartments were thrown open, displaying the most magnificent and costly furniture. The tessellated marble hall was decorated with choice exotics, whose delicious fragrance filled the air. A liveried servant took Mr. Howard's name, and immediately returned, and requested him to walk up stairs. The apartments on this floor were also thrown open, and far exceeded the others in splendor. Lizzy whispered,

"Where can the bed-rooms be, papa?"

"Above this, of course."

'Then they must have as far to go to bed, as poor Sally Jones in her garret."

Rather farther, dear, as Sally's bed is in her garret, and her garret is her all."

They were ushered into a small room fancifully arranged. The walls and ceiling were exquisitely painted. On the side opposite the window, which was curtained with richly wrought lace, was the representation of a window with similar drapery, and peeping from behind it was a face so full of glee, and childish beauty, that one was instinctively prompted to snatch a kiss from those round rosy lips, which seemed ready to open, and utter a merry laugh. Those rich auburn tresses, touched by the sun's farewell beams—are they not stirring with the passing breeze? Canvas, and paint, and varnish—impossible! so thought Lizzy as she gazed delightedly.

On one side of the door was Leander, just landing after his perilous voyage, and rushing into the arms of Hero—the moon shining out in full glory, and bathing the enchanting landscape in its silver light. On the other side—Leander

battling with the waves, and Hero, scarcely discernible in the intense darkness, kneeling, and with uplifted hands supplicating Heaven for his safety.

Opposite to these, was the first meeting of Telemachus with Calypso, on her beautiful island.

The ceiling was concave ; divided into four compartments, and containing representations of the four Seasons. From the centre was suspended a lamp of antique form, and exquisite workmanship.

The apartment had been fitted up most elaborately and expensively, as a boudoir, for Mr. Meanly's only daughter, who had died two years before, leaving one child.

A very old gentleman, and the original of the arch face at the window, were the only persons in the room when Mr. Howard and his daughter entered.

The former, pale and emaciated, was reclining on a damask couch. The latter, a very Hebe, was bending over him, wiping the moisture from his brow, and trying to lure to his relief some cooling air, by means of a large fan.

"Ah! Howard, glad to see you—though going fast you see—going fast," said Mr. Meanly, in a low husky voice.

"Not so bad as that I hope," said Mr. Howard, taking the invalid's extended hand. "It is natural for the worn out spirits to anticipate the worst, and you have all 'appliances, and means' that can aid in your recovery." "Yes, thank Heaven, I've a jewel of a doctor—a diamond of the first water; but one fault, Howard, but one fault. Cautious, attentive, patient, persevering and skilful, but such bills! Never think of paying one as it is sent—always cut it down to suit myself. From the last bill deducted 20 per cent., and then thought the fellow was well paid."

"There must certainly have been a great difference of opinion between you!" remarked Mr. Howard. "Yes, he assured me that he had charged but half of what the law allowed him—spoke of his large family; but I was not to be humbugged through my heart."

Mr. Howard's contempt would certainly have been visible to any but such little mean blinkers as were now fastened on him.

"What are you musing about, Howard? any

thing of moment on your mind?" inquired the sick man after a pause.

"Yes, the business about which I called to see you, Mr. Meanly, is of great moment."

"Of great moment! Proceed, my friend, proceed," said the millionnaire as eagerly as if he anticipated some addition to his millions.

"You recollect Edward Miller? I believe you and he were old cronies in school days."

"Remember him? perfectly. A very clever fellow was Ned. But he is not living?"

"No, but he left a son, who is very unfortunate, and I have been endeavoring to provide pecuniary aid, or influence, to enable him to commence business."

"Very sorry for the young man, Mr. Howard, but can't have any thing to do in the affair—can't indeed!" "I am sorry and disappointed," said Mr. Howard, "for in making out a list of those whose willing co-operation I expected, your name was the first. A very trifle to you, merely, as a loan would be of much importance to him."

"I am too old, and too sick, Mr. Howard, to attend to such affairs now. Besides, there is no reason why he shouldn't work for his money, as

I have done. "No, no, I didn't labor in my youth, for the pleasure of helping beggars in my old age."

Mr. Howard was hurt.

"He is not a beggar, sir," said he, "and I am very sure never will be, if I have the power to prevent it. In justice to him allow me to add, that he is entirely unconscious of what I am endeavoring to do for him."

"Well, well, Mr. Howard, as you please," exclaimed the poor, *beggarly-poor* rich man. "*You* can afford it I suppose—I cannot."

A servant entered, and presented a note to Mr. Meanly, which he opened and read, and then turning to the bearer, said, "Tell him to have them here early in the morning, Ben, and to call upon Mr. Squire, my agent, with his bill." Then addressing Mr. Howard, "This is the way my money flies, Howard; a thousand dollars for a span of horses! My sons will be here to-morrow from the South, and I promised them an entire new equipage. Well, well, it is pleasant to gratify one's children."

Mr. Howard rose, and beckoned to Lizzy, who was standing at one of the windows, with her

arm thrown lovingly round the sweet child's neck, talking as familiarly as if they had been old friends. They parted with a warm kiss, mutually delighted with each other.

When Lizzy and her father were in the street he said, "You now see, my love, why I cannot purchase Italian pictures."

"Yes, dear papa. Not that you love beauty less, but humanity more, as you said to auntie yesterday, when she wrapped her embroidered handkerchief round Biddy's bleeding foot. But wasn't that an angel child, papa?"

"Too lovely indeed to be under such debasing influences," remarked Mr. Howard, with a sigh.

"Do you know, papa, I thought that Mrs. Duncan in her hut, with all those pretty flowers, and trees, and birds, seemed more happy than Mr. Meanly in his great castle?"

"But, Lizzy," asked Mr. Howard, "can you think of no way by which the happiness of both might be increased?"

"I think I can," answered the child, after a moment's pause. "By Mr. Meanly giving a few of the chairs he cannot use very often, to Mrs. Duncan, who hasn't quite as many as she needs."

"Then, Lizzy, I am sure you would rather have the power to make one heart happy, than to own the beautiful sibyl?"

"Indeed would I, just now, papa; yet when I am drawing to-morrow, and thinking of symmetry, and color, I shall very likely wish for it just as much as ever. And I think it would make me better to look every day at those soft, motherly eyes. Indeed, papa, I am sure it would make me better."

Mr. Howard drew the arm that was leaning on his, tenderly to his heart, but remained silent.

"Do you think, papa," asked the child earnestly, "that it is sinful to gratify taste?"

"No, my child," answered her father affectionately; "it comes from the source of every good and perfect gift, and should be used wisely and not selfishly. You know we felt some contempt for the person we called on a few days since, because, while his walls were covered with choice specimens of art, he was deeply in debt. Now, Lizzy dear, I think God has made us all debtors to those poorer and more ignorant than ourselves."

"Then I suppose," said Lizzy in a sad tone, "we must always live without paintings."

"No, no, my darling Lizzy, may-be not; at present, I could not gratify you without being unwarrantably selfish. But have a little patience, dear, until a few debts are paid, and then we will talk about the picture. When I have laid aside a small sum for our old friend Mrs. Duncan, and placed poor Miller in a situation to help himself and his family, and thrown by a few dollars for some other poor fellows who may need help, then Lizzy, dear, I can, with a clear conscience, do myself the favor of gratifying your filial affection."

If Lizzy had not been in the street she would have thrown her arms round her father's neck, and thanked him with kisses; as it was, she drew closer to her side the arm on which her small hand rested. "Thank you, thank you, papa; and I love you all the better for obliging me to wait. But in the mean time, dear papa, will you take me again to your picture gallery?"

"Indeed I will, dearest, and to my other galleries, too; the Academy of Design, and the Cosmorama, and perhaps to others."

"Yours, papa?"

"Yes, mine dear; for though I have not paid for the canvas and paint, the ideas they suggest are mine, and will continue so, after Time has destroyed them."

Mamma's birthday had always been a joyful period to Lizzy, until the melancholy event which deprived her of a mother's love. Since then a deeper shadow on her father's brow, and a gentler tone than usual, were the only changes that marked the day.

The next anniversary after the visit to Mr. Howard's picture gallery, what was Lizzy's ecstasy on her return from school, at beholding the "beautiful, fascinating sibyl," gazing upon her with those soft, *motherly* eyes!

A flood of joyful tears shed upon her father's bosom, were the only thanks she could offer for so long-desired and well-timed a gratification.

The children were greatly interested.

"I would like to know who wrote that story, mamma," said Charley; "for if the names were different, I should think Mr. Meanly and Mrs. Duncan were our acquaintances."

"Oh! yes, yes; I know who," said Kate.

"And so don't I," exclaimed Ned.

"Well, I'll tell you, brother," said Kate affectionately whispering in his ear.

"And am I not to know?" asked Mrs. Morton.

"Oh! dear mamma, I think we must keep secret," said the girl.

"Yes, yes, till mother tells us where she got that book," said Charles.

"Come here," said Ned, "and I'll tell you."

They both crowded around him, and he whispered something that made them laugh, and exclaim—"Yes, yes; may-be so—may-be so."

"Well, you keep your secret, and I'll keep mine," said Mrs. Morton, laughing as she left the room in pursuit of her little ones, who were amusing themselves in their play-room; in a few minutes Ned followed her, and the brother and sister were left alone.

Again the subject nearest both their hearts was introduced. He was resolved in some way to exert himself for the benefit of the family. He knew that his mother would not consent to his leaving school, and he could think of nothing but going to sea, and strange to say, without his mother's knowledge. Poor little tender-hearted

Kate ! she was shocked and distressed; and ended her remonstrances and entreaties, watered with a plentiful shower of tears, with—" Well, Charley, if you're going to sea on mother's account, you are very silly, for she will never live till you come back. Cruel, as well as silly brother, to think of such a thing."

Charles looked serious.

" But then, Goosey dear," said he, trying to throw off his gravity, while tears stood in his eyes, "that is only your thought, and I won't let it trouble me." The girl said not a word, but rising from her seat, she threw herself on her knees beside it, clasped her hands, and resting her head on them, prayed silently for some minutes. Her brother was troubled. It was evident that, having done all she could to change his mind, she was soliciting aid of her heavenly Father. When she rose he threw his arms round her, and kissing her tenderly said," Don't fear, Kate ; I will do nothing without letting you know," and left her.

This was certainly a relief, for she knew whatever her brother promised, he was sure to perform. And he resolved, at least for the present,

to lay aside his plans, and try to think of nothing but his studies.

Many weeks had elapsed since the last reading, and nothing specially interesting had occurred.

A great deal of sewing and mending, and preparing for winter, had been the principal cause of the interruption.

The beggar girl had not been neglected. Mrs. Morton had found for her a good place, where, to Kate's joy, she was taught to read. She had a mother, and at first two brothers ; the youngest had sickened, and soon died, although kindly attended to by Kate and her mother. The other was too young to do much, and the mother could get but little to do.

What could be spared from Mrs. Morton's frugal table was given to them, and they returned all they could—strong expressions of gratitude ; they had no opportunity of uttering the louder speech of actions.

Summer was now over, and the weather was unusually cold for the season. Winter seemed to be rushing into the arms of autumn. Her

gorgeous drapery had been rudely torn away, and scattered to the winds.

One evening, when the snow was falling fast, and the little family, all but Jessie and Willie, who had retired, were sitting round a table at different employments, Kate exclaimed, "Dear mamma, do you know how very long it is since we had a story from that mysterious book?"

"Not exactly, but it certainly is some time, Kate; and as I have just finished this garment, I will gratify you."

"Ah, that's a darling mamma," said Charles.

"Yes, the *darlingest* that was ever made," cried Ned—

> "Did not this tyrant blindness
> Keep me here—I'd show thee the best spring,
> I'd pluck thee berries, I'd fish for thee'—

indeed, mother, I would."

"Thank you, dear," said his mother, kissing him, as she went to the drawer for the book; but to her great surprise, it was not there. She stood a moment leaning over the drawer without speaking; at last she exclaimed, "Well, I wonder what has become of it?"

"Why, mother, is it gone?" cried Kate.

"It is not here," said Mrs. Morton, but she neither looked, nor said, "I guess who has been meddling." She would not have suspected any of her rational children of such an act. She did think of Jessie, for she sometimes gave a good deal of trouble by hiding things. So she went up stairs to search, and as soon as she entered her room, it occurred to her, that she had put it into one of her drawers.

The children were standing at the door when she returned, and shouted when they saw the book. "Well, mother, who was the thief?" asked Charles.

"Myself, dear, and here it is safe and sound."

"Mother, I think we shall call you a sibyl, with that mystical book which no one can discover any thing about," said Ned.

"I hope you won't disappear as mysteriously as she did," exclaimed Charles.

"Hush," cried Kate, "don't you see mother is ready to begin?"

They all resumed their occupations, and Mrs. Morton began to read—

The Sleigh Ride: or, Who is the Meanest?

It was a bright, bracing, blustering morning in December; just such a morning when little folks are quite willing to take mother's advice, to put on their woollen mittens, and to tie their caps over their ears, and to run to school fast, before Jack Frost catches them.

Nature, decked in blue and silver, with brilliant crown, and sparkling pendants, seemed to be keeping high holiday. The whole city had evidently entered into a league with fun and frolic, for the streets were filled with prancing steeds and jingling bells, and joyous shouts.

Boreas, too, was lending his aid in the general bustle, and it was laughable to see the uncouth figures on the chimneys, twisting round like fakirs at their devotions, and the giant trees, as if to deprecate his wrath, tossing their bare arms, and wildly creaking forth remonstrances; while the poor pedestrian, with closely wrapped cloak, slouched hat, and bent form, was trying to escape the icy daggers which seemed aimed at his unprotected face.

Turning the corner of a street, two of these bending figures met, and jostled against each other with such force, that the slightest reeled several paces. "By George, Fred, is it you?"

"Not hurt, I hope?" exclaimed a tall, stout youth, laying his hand on his friend's shoulder. "Not hurt, Ned, but in as great trepidation as if an elephant's proboscis had been thrust into my face, instead of your harmless hat." A loud laugh followed this remark. "Well, as you are not demolished," said the aggressor, as soon as he had acquired sufficient composure to speak, and the other to listen, "I want you to join our party; we've four sleighs engaged, and Dick Lothrop is to get his father's, if he can. Oh, we shall have a glorious time." "Gloriously cold?" said his companion. "Cold, indeed! who ever heard of sleighing in any but cold weather? and besides, I'll wager just such an oyster supper as I lost last night, that after noon the wind will lull. No, no, Fred, that excuse won't do, and if you have any Christian charity, or brotherly kindness, or even common friendship, I'm sure you will aid us. Our expenses can't be less than sixty or seventy dollars, and that's rather a heavy pull

for four. Come, say you'll go, and persuade Tom Hunt and Joe Marsden to join us." "That I cannot do conscientiously, Ned; for Tom and Joe have small salaries, and large demands in the form of helpless relations; and as for myself, though the air were delicious as a summer's sunset, I must decline." "Well, well, as you please," said the disappointed youth, in a tone that bespoke his chagrin, and they parted. His indignation had an opportunity of embodying itself in words, as he soon met Dick Lothrop. After relating the conversation that had just passed, he exclaimed, "A mean, miserly fellow, without one generous impulse; he might have considered it an honor to be invited any where with well-dressed folks, in his spinster-like garments of a very *uncertain age.* But he's good company, and Helen sings sweetly; so I thought we'd put up with his sieve cloak and slouched hat, which has as little to do with a nap as Macbeth after he had murdered sleep." "Mean! miserly! really, Ned, if my father had not laid his injunctions on me never to fight, my fist would introduce itself to your nose in no very courteous style."

"Why, why, why," cried Ned, starting back, "how long has Mr. Frederick Harper possessed such a valiant champion?" "Excuse me, Ned," said Lothrop, holding out his hand, "but I know you are mistaken; Frederick is a noble, generous fellow. If you only knew him as well as I, but that is impossible now." Edward took the proffered hand, but laughed at what he called mere poetry. "No, no, I'm not to be cajoled by your enthusiasm; my own experience is worth more to me than your impressions. Didn't this generous friend of yours refuse to lend me five dollars last week, when I wished to take a box at the opera? and didn't he refuse to subscribe to our assemblies? Facts before fancies, Dick." "I have facts, too, that would make yours kick the beam; but I do not feel at liberty to set them off against yours." "I have no doubt you have some will-o'-the-wisp foundation for your strange belief, but reputations may be gained as well as lost by falsehood."

Pugnacity seemed to be again rising, but was quelled, as it had been before, by the inward mentor which a father's vigilance had so kindly provided. "As you seem disposed to put aside

every thing in favor of the accused, but direct testimony, you shall have it, and I will trust to your honor for secrecy. A bill was brought to my father against Marsden. The creditor considered him indolent and dishonest, and directed that no indulgence should be shown. Harper, by some chance hearing of this, came to my father, spoke in high terms of Marsden, who, he said, had no fault but poverty—paid the bill, and requested that a receipt might be sent to him, without communicating Harper's name. I took the receipt myself, and never have I witnessed such joy and gratitude. My father on inquiry found these statements correct, and procured for Marsden a better situation."

"Well, that is something of a set-off—but early impressions, you know, are strong, and it strikes me as rather Quixotic to be paying other people's debts, to the utter neglect of his own flesh and blood." "Who do you mean, Ned?" "Don't be frightened—literally, his own body; the members whereof might make a protest against the dishonor with which they are treated. I know I'd take care of number one first." "I think *you* would," cried Lothrop, running off

laughing. "Humbugged, and doomed to be humbugged," thought Edward. "I, at any rate, have no reason to laud his generosity. If he's so flush, he might have helped me along with this sleigh-ride."

Irritating circumstances dogged his steps, as if to steal from the anticipated ride as much pleasure as possible. On entering his boarding-house, a little ragged boy followed him, whose hand-and-glove intimacy with poverty was fully attested by two unbribed witnesses, rags and dirt. Her influence, however, had not destroyed civility; for after the preliminary bow and scrape, he stood with cap in hand, while he delivered the following appeal:

"Mammy tould me, if you'd plaze sind her the money for the washin',—she says she aint got no coal, nor no bread, nor nothin', and if you don't sind her the money she's owed, she must go wantin'." Edward drew from his pocket a shilling—"Take that to your mother, my boy, and tell her I'll pay the rest very soon." "To-morrow, sir?" asked the child beseechingly. "Oh yes, very like—yes, perhaps to-morrow;" and he closed the door after the troublesome intruder.

In a few moments the sleigh was at the door, but just as he was ready to jump into it, a letter was handed to him. It contained the following words :—

"A poor old woman by the name of Barker, in the village of ——, of whom you may have some *slight* recollection, has broken her arm, and otherwise injured herself. The circumstance is mentioned to you, as affording an opportunity of investing any of your unappropriated funds.

"I remain as respectfully as I can ! ! !"

Who wrote this strange epistle Edward could not conceive. It was so unlike his sister, that he could not suspect her. The insinuation of cruelty brought the color to his cheeks, but like an electric shock, the effect was soon over. It was too late now to make any change in his plans, and although he knew that his friend William Geer, who could not afford such expensive recreations, would gladly take his place, he was too disinterested to permit his own troubles to interfere with the pleasure of others ; and so well did he disguise his feelings, that only once was he led by them into any impropriety. "A broken arm, and otherwise injured !—at her

age, I should not wonder if she were dead. Anonymous,—though, possibly, a quiz." Such thoughts were passing through his mind, as a loud laugh from Richard Lothrop roused him. "Why, Ned, what have you recognized in that piece of bread, at which you have been gazing as intently for the last five minutes as if it were a love letter?" "Love letter, indeed," repeated Ned, trying to join in the laugh. "Oh, a refusal! well, well, there is no knowing what any of us may come to, as one sweep said to another, when a great tragedian was pointed out to him;" and Lothrop's irresistibly good-natured laugh was echoed from all parts of the table, by many who had not heard the joke.

Frederick and his sister had received a very kind invitation from Richard, in which he said, "I wish you to consider yourselves in all respects as my guests," and he accordingly devoted himself to them the whole evening; which marked attention secured for them the courtesy of those who, under other circumstances, would have quite overlooked them. Both were at first disposed to decline the invitation, but their mother urged them to go. "You are young, my children, and

need recreation ; besides, by keeping aloof from the world, and refusing to come in contact with its strange elements, one is apt to imagine himself composed of rarer, or richer material, than others. As distant objects appear smaller than they really are, by contrasting ourselves with them, we are in danger of imagining all the world except ourselves pigmies."

Had mesmerism, or any other revelation of the invisible disclosed to Edward what was passing in his early home, possibly frivolity and selfishness might have been checked.

On a bed lay a woman, whose right arm was bandaged and immovable, while the left was making awkward attempts at raising to her mouth a spoonful of gruel from a bowl, which stood on a table beside her. The hieroglyphics which covered her face needed no Champollion to decipher them. Every one, with a heart, could read a sad story of poverty, temptation, struggle, and disappointment. In all the arrangements of the room, there seemed a competition between neatness and poverty. The sheets were very thin, and coarse, but exceedingly white, and well patched. The carpet had not *grown*

smaller, but in getting old, and in having the rags removed, the floor was left partly bare; but this was as clean as scrubbing could make it. At a table in one corner of the room stood a girl ironing, but her mind seemed less engaged with her employment, than with her companion; for at the least slip of the spoon, or the slightest indication of uneasiness, her iron was put down, and she was at the bedside in a moment. "There, child," said the sufferer, "take away the bowl; it is too much trouble to eat any more." "And you won't let me feed you, dear mother?" said the girl, in a sad tone. "No, no; I'm trouble enough without that, Lizzy. You have not written to Edward, I suppose?" "No, you requested me not to write." "I know I did; but I've been thinking that the poor boy might hear by chance what has happened, and perhaps leave his business to come, and see us; so you had better write, child, and tell him I'm better, and tell him not to be worried. Poor, dear child! it must be hard enough for him to get along, without troubling him with our trials; so tell him we're comfortable, and don't want for any thing." Maternal love had exiled truth. The

girl's eyes filled with tears, and soon as her work was finished, she sat down to obey her mother, which, to her truthful nature, was no easy task. Poor, neglected Lizzy! how many a gaudily dressed city belle might have envied thy graceful form, thy rich chestnut hair, laid smoothly over thy polished brow, and the delicate rose tint of thy cheek, which labor and anxiety had failed to blanch.

But to return to the party. Early in the evening Richard proposed returning home. His father did not approve of late sleigh-riding—Edward, with several others, opposed it vociferously. It was too bad to take off Frederick and Helen, if he didn't wish to stay. It availed nothing—Richard would rather disoblige the whole world than break his word, or disobey his father.

"How glad I am that you have returned," said Mrs. Harper, as her children entered the parlor in which she was sitting. "I was afraid something might tempt you to stay later than you expected, and that I should be cheated out of my night's kiss." "You know, mother, as we were with Richard Lothrop, there was no danger

of our going very far from the right line. His father prescribed the hour." "I wish his prescription had been less adapted to his own age than to ours," cried Helen. "I was engaged to dance with Henry Barker; and a few minutes could not have been of much consequence to Mr. Lothrop." "I should have liked to stay a little longer too," said Frederick, "but I think Richard was right." "Yes, perfectly right," rejoined Mrs. Harper; "such habits of punctuality will be of more service to him, hereafter, than his father's large fortune."

Helen's heart acquiesced, but she smiled and said nothing. With a parting kiss, and an unusually affectionate good-night, the old lady retired.

"Dear mother! she little imagines what is in store for her," said Frederick. "And you really think our plan—your plan, I should say, my dear brother—can be accomplished?"

"Think! I know it can; and I wish, Helen, you would not talk of my plan, when but for your aid it never could have succeeded. On the 20th I shall meet the remaining creditors, and pay off every fraction. The 21st is mother's birth-

day. Will not that news be to her more than a hundred birthday presents ? "

" Indeed it will. And then, with my enlarged salary, you, dear Helen, need not be such a little busybody."

" Dear, dear brother ! I wish you would not always be thinking about me; there is but one regret that dares intrude into my happy heart. If our father could have known this ! With his elevated ideas of justice and integrity, I believe it cost him as bitter a pang to leave his debts unpaid as his family penniless."

" Could he ! " exclaimed Frederick, putting his arm tenderly around her. " Do you know, dearest, that I think he does know how we have labored to complete his unfinished work. Oh ! my own Helen, had it not been for this strengthening influence, I fear that I should have been unable to endure and resist all that I have. In your quiet seclusion, dear, you know nothing of the temptations which assail young men, in the shape of theatres, operas, social parties ; nor of the opprobrium which attaches to any one, who, adhering to his sense of right, deviates from the fashions of the day."

"You are greatly mistaken, Fred, in supposing that temptation is entirely swept out of my path. It crosses it occasionally in the suggestion of a friend that shilling calico does well enough for a *morning* dress, but that goods are so cheap now, that every one can afford to dress handsomely; or a sly hint from another, that if people do not care about dress themselves, they ought to appear as well as they can, on account of the friends who are so kind as to invite them to their houses; or a tremendous sledge-hammer argument from a third, that folks are always respected according to the appearance they make. But one glance at my mother's pale, melancholy face, is always sufficient to demolish a hundred such suggestions, hints and arguments. Dear mother!"—and the tears started to her eyes—"I can think of nothing but her delight. You don't know, Fred, how often I have lain awake, when she was peculiarly feeble or ailing, dreading that she might be taken away before we had completed our plans. I am so glad the time is near; I wish it were to-morrow." "Well, let it be to-morrow, if you will. I flatter myself that my credit is sufficiently good to allow me to anticipate

pay day a week, and no matter for the birthday." "No, brother," cried Helen, smiling through her tears, "I am not so babyish, quite. But I think I have a little amusement before me," she added, as she took from a pantry a large basket full of clothes, and commenced examining its contents. "And what do you call this?" asked Frederick, holding up a jacket which evidently had seen its best days. "Been to Rag Fair, and bought bargains, sister?" "No, I'm not the owner of these antiques, they belong to Sylvia. I went to see her this morning, and found two of her children sick, and herself worn out with watching. Her eldest boy had gone to bed, like the American general, until his garments were washed, and had some of their crannies stopped. The first process being over, I told the poor woman to make up a bundle, and I'd bring them home, and mend them. You see how beautifully things are ordered, Fred; I shall have no coloring for a week, and so I shall be able to assist Sylvia. Painters talk of *high light;* I believe that is all we need, spiritually, to discover how circumstances fit into each other." "May you ever enjoy this light, my dear Helen,

which beams from your own warm heart, and reveals to you order, where others behold nothing but confusion." "And from whose heart, brother, comes this light, that not only reveals but creates? No matter about the answer, for in prospect of to-morrow's labor of love, it behooveth me to return; so good night, Fred, and pleasant dreams."

Mr. Harper had for many years been a prosperous merchant, and celebrated for his honorable, straightforward course. Owing entirely to the speculations of others, he became involved; but through all changes, the same integrity marked his conduct. He could not brook the mortification of insolvency. He never held up his head after the disgrace, as he esteemed it. His health declined, and when he died, every one said that a broken heart carried him to his grave. His wife, who shared his grief, mourned for him as only those can, whose gentle and affectionate natures cling to earthly loveliness, and forget that it is mortal. But the tendrils, which had been so rudely broken, soon twined round the delicate plants which were left to her sole care, and well did their vigorous support in after years re-

pay anxious days and prayerful nights. Frederick was placed with a merchant, who had known and esteemed his father. His salary, which was at first small, had been repeatedly increased, until it became sufficient for their moderate support. Helen also employed herself in adding to their small income. Soon as Frederick was settled in his place, the children began to hope that after a great many years he might be prosperous, and able to pay off those horrid debts which had been such a withering blight to their father, and continued to haunt their mother's age. But riches come not with a whoop or a call; and they resolved, instead of waiting for so capricious an aid, to rely on persevering industry and rigid economy. It may be imagined, that the tie which bound together these young laborers in so holy a cause, was of no ordinary strength. Affection scattered over the rough path of duty flowers of unearthly loveliness; and now, after years of loving co-operation, the good fight was fought, the race was run, and a crown beyond all regal glory awaited them.

The evening after the sleigh-ride, Frederick received a note from Henry, conjuring him to

visit him immediately at the city prison. Without a moment's delay he obeyed the strange summons, secretly distrusting its authenticity. It was, however, a veritable epistle from his volatile friend, who had exchanged luxurious lodgings at a fashionable boarding-house, for a loathsome cell.

The sleighing party had remained out of town till a late hour. Champagne had performed its usual feats in dethroning reason, demolishing the Crystal Palaces, in which it had foamed and sparkled, and making the recreation, which had commenced so pleasantly, end in confusion and riot. Henry was the ringleader, and the only person who had rendered himself liable to prosecution. In his great extremity, instead of applying to those who were so ready to share in his pleasures, he turned to the *mean, stingy* fellow, at whom he was accustomed to sneer.

Frederick shuddered, as the door slowly opened, and he discovered his misguided companion lying on a bed, or rack, on which he had thrown himself in despair. He seated himself beside him, took his hand, pressed it kindly, but said nothing. Henry had buried his face in the bed-

clothes, and seemed dead to all around him. At length Frederick said in a low gentle tone—"My dear friend, this is a sad situation truly, but rouse yourself and tell me how I can serve you. "Oh! oh! that I should ever come to this!" exclaimed the wretched youth, as he suddenly raised himself, and gave utterance to a burst of agony so intense, that Frederick started, and with the kindest words and most soothing attentions sought to restore him to calmness. At length with much incoherence he informed Frederick that Mr. Black, his employer, was to leave town the next day; that he had desired to see him that evening; and that if the truth came to his ears, he would of course lose his situation; and at the thought of this inevitable consequence, the poor fellow was again overcome by his feelings. "And that is not all," added he, rousing himself. "Read this letter and see the extent of my wickedness and my misery." It was the anonymous epistle. After perusing it, and sitting some time silent and thoughtful, Frederick threw it down, went to the door and knocked at it, while he said—"I will return in a moment!" The keeper, who, considering the indurating influences

by which he was constantly surrounded, was a humane man, owed his present situation to Mr. Harper's exertions; he therefore was glad to oblige his son, and readily consented to let him take the prisoner's place, on condition that by the next dawn he should return to his cell.

When Frederick communicated his plan, his impulsive friend gave way to his joy as extravagantly as he had a few moments before to his sorrow. With a note from Frederick to his sister, Henry left his disgusting abode, and flew to Mr. Black's residence, before his absence had created any suspicion.

The next morning, as Helen was as usual preparing her brother's early breakfast, and before his mother had risen, he returned home, and with many injunctions to secrecy, communicated to his sister what had happened. She was shocked and delighted. "My own generous brother, little did I think that your errand of mercy, as you called it, had led you to such lodgings." And she threw her arms round his neck and kissed him tenderly. "Then you think, Helen, that I should not have refused to assist Henry?" "Refused! why certainly not,

though I am sure some would, in your situation. It certainly was neither kind nor generous in him to say what he has of you ; but you know mother's remark to Mrs. Brown, when she remonstrated with her for assisting such an ungrateful creature as Peggy Mills. "To love those only who love us, and to serve those only who have benefited us, is the morality of the Pharisees, not of Jesus !" "Oh ! Henry spoke hastily and without being aware of facts," said Frederick. "But what do you think, sister, is further to be done ?" "Why, to get him out of prison as soon as possible." "And are you aware that this cannot be done without funds ?" "Will no one be bail for him ?" "Possibly, but in that case he must endure all the publicity of a trial, and probably lose his situation." "That is bad, for I have heard that he has a mother and sister whom he supports." Frederick said nothing of the letter, but resolved to write immediately to a friend who lived in the same village. He knew if Helen heard of Henry's negligence, or rather heartlessness, her sympathy would be converted into contempt. Besides, the statement might be untrue, and should he be de-

serted and disgraced now, it would probably seal his fate for ever. After a pause Helen resumed: "Henry has a good many friends, and will no one lend him the money?" "Sunshine friends, dearest, who never appear in cloudy weather. Their prodigality leaves them nothing in such an emergency. Think again, dear; can you suggest no other plan?" "I cannot, without you sacrilegiously take the offering laid upon the altar of duty." "My own dear Helen, the very thing, and the only thing I can think of. But do not call the performance of a duty a sacrilege."

"Justice, you know, should take precedence of generosity." "Yes, but I consider both acts of justice, and one much more imperatively demanded, by every dictate of humanity, than the other." Helen looked sad, and her eyes filled with tears. "You know, my dear sister, we are the only persons who can experience any disappointment, and that only for a short time. Three months will soon pass, and then for the second act of justice." "Dear Fred," cried Helen, throwing back her long curls, and in so doing dexterously removing from her eyes the silent witnesses of her disappointment; "your

generosity is always putting my selfishness to the blush; but, indeed, if it had not been for mother's birthday, I would not have said a word." "No matter, sis, your birthday shall be celebrated instead, and we will enjoy the pleasant thought of having saved Henry from ruin, and his mother from a broken heart."

Frederick immediately made the necessary arrangements, the suit was withdrawn, and Henry restored to liberty. "Do not, my son, let his misconduct cause you to regret the kindness you have shown him," said Mrs. Harper, when the anonymous insinuations were confirmed; "he may have learned a lesson which shall change his whole character." Weeds that have been long growing, are not readily uprooted, and Henry's selfishness received only a slight check. During the very short period that his mother lived, he prevented her suffering for common necessaries; and the small sum he allowed his sister sufficed, with her own earnings, to save her from want, but he never found it quite convenient to pay the doctor who attended his mother. Young men's expenses in a city are so great!

Mrs. Harper's birthday, which had been so long anticipated as a bright era in her children's lives, was ushered in with anxiety and alarm. She was seized with a dangerous illness, and as Helen bent hour after hour over the sufferer, bathing her fevered brow, or soothing her irritated nerves with the gentlest attentions, the thought of the cherished hoard of happiness laid up for this day, which, as far as her mother was concerned, would be unavailing—of those years of toil and privation, which *she* would never know —haunted her like a spectre ; but she wisely refrained from even whispering it to Frederick, lest it should become more definite and fixed in her mind. So they watched, and hoped, and feared silently, seeking to strengthen each other for the heavy load of sorrow they might be called to bear. But patient labor in well-doing was not destined to lose its reward ; before the three months had expired, the old lady had regained much of her wonted health and cheerfulness, and the second birthday brought with it the richest enjoyment which such pure and devoted hearts could experience. Mrs. Harper, who was to leave her sick room for the first time, proposed inviting a

few young folks, but her children opposed it, promising to give their reasons when the day was over.

After tea they were reminded of their promise, and each affectionately taking an arm of the old lady, led her to a small room which they called their library. Besides books, it contained all the little elegancies and treasures of art, which had been presented by kind friends. Their mother was seated in a cushioned chair, beside a table spread with the birthday treat. There were no icy peaks, looking down upon islands of blanc-mange, and lakes abounding with oysters, and large oceans of punch, and here and there, a sweet Charlotte de Russe,—only a few dried fruits, and a basket of fine grapes reposing quietly in the beams of a massive silver pitcher which bore, on the front, the following inscription :—"To Mrs. Harper, as a memorial of her son's integrity and honor," and on the base, modestly concealed from casual observation, among the leaves of the border, "Presented by George Lothrop, William Godwin, John Brooks." Under the pitcher lay a receipt, bearing the same names, and stating how long the debt had been due, and by whom contracted. Frederick, as he

placed in her hands the paper, drew towards her the pitcher. She glanced from one to the other; and then, fixing her eyes on the happy faces of her children, she exclaimed, as the tears streamed down her furrowed cheeks, "This is almost too much joy for such a withered heart to bear."

"My dear mother, I am afraid we have been very thoughtless, and measured your strength by our own," cried Helen, as she threw her arms round her mother's neck and wept with her.

"Pardon me, my children," said the old lady, rousing herself and taking a hand of each—"pardon me, my son, to whom I am indebted for all the happiness of this hour."

"No, indeed, dearest mother, not all. Helen has done as much as I, and her name ought to have been recorded as well as mine."

"We will defer the discussion of my rights," interposed Helen, "till a more convenient time."

"Right, my good daughter; this hour should not be profaned by mean jealousy; let it be to us a season of silent thanksgiving to the Bestower of all good."

The three knelt down, each heart laying its

own offering on the altar. From the fulness of her grateful heart, the mother's feelings at length broke forth, and in an almost inaudible tone, she breathed the prayer, "Bless them, oh my God! for their love to the living, their devotion to the dead, bless them now and ever."

Shortly after, while, in a more composed state, they were admiring the costly present and the munificence of their friends, Richard Lothrop entered. He alone had been in Frederick's confidence, and had first suggested to his father the idea of the beautiful memorial. The evening passed delightfully to all, and one given to peer into the misty future might have discerned, at no very distant point, bridal wreaths, and merry groups, and solemn vows—from the peculiar manner in which Richard and Helen met; but with such matters we have nothing to do, as they in no way affect the question of "Who is the meanest?"

"That's a beautiful story," said Kate; "I think, mamma, it's the best story you have read to us. I wish I knew Helen, to ask her how she became so good; dear me, I wish I was half as good."

"I am glad that the mysterious book, as you call it, has bowed itself out so satisfactorily. That is the last story."

"I am very sorry," said Ned, walking towards his mother, and stretching out his hand till it rested on her shoulder.

But Charles was silent and thoughtful; and when his mother said it was late, and time to go to bed, he started and exclaimed,—

"Yes, mother, I think so far he was a noble fellow."

Mrs. Morton and the children laughed heartily; and each seizing the absent boy, shook him to bring him home, as they said, from his wanderings; and he, forcing himself to join in their fun, laughed as heartily, or, at any rate, as loudly as the others.

"Now you're awake, my dear Charley," said his mother, kissing him, "better get to bed soon, and sleep fast, for there will be a little shovelling to do in the morning, I think."

"Yes, I shall be ready, mother," he said, returning her salute.

CHAPTER IX.

NATURE was busy all night, forming a mantle for her child, in place of the splendid robe of crimson and gold, of which Boreas had stripped her. By the dawn the mantle was finished, to the last flake ; and the naked earth wrapped in its ample folds.

While the prosperous are rubbing their hands, and chuckling at the prospect of grand sleighing and high times ; and the starving are congratulating themselves at the thought of the few cents they will earn by removing the white drapery, and again leaving the earth unrobed ; my little readers shall be introduced into the beggar-girl's former abode—a low, damp, *dirty* room.

Please, little dears, don't be shocked, and think, as so many of your elders do, that if people are *poor* they need not be *dirty*. They

need not, and would not, probably, if they had been taught to be neat, and orderly, when young. But if you could see in what sort of places most of these dirty, slovenly folks draw their first breath, you would cease to wonder at any amount of dirt, or disorder, among them. Indeed, I fear if your childhood had been passed so very near the pigs, your comfortable home might be somewhat of a piggery too. Therefore, I pray you, my readers, young or old, pity that portion of God's heritage that has been left uncultivated ; pity, but do not despise. Their disorder, inefficiency, and deception, are born of earthly circumstances,—their gratitude and faithfulness, of Heaven.

In this very low, damp, dirty room, with a light in her hand, so pale and sickly that it seemed infected with the gloom it could not remove, knelt a woman beside a miserable thing she called a bed, on which lay a boy in so sound a sleep that shaking, and calling, were for some time unsuccessful in waking him.

" Tommy—Tommy—Tommy, up, up,—the morning is coming sure, and you'll have many a job to do. Come, git up, git up,"—at last

roused him, and produced a drowsy "H–a–y! do leave me be!" After several invitations, he made an effort to rouse himself, and exclaimed pettishly,—"Why, what makes you git me up now? 'taint mornin'."

"Ah, sonny, not jist, but 'twill be soon; and I want you to go down to Miss Morton's, and clear away the snow afore she's up,—won't that be a pretty nice trick to play her?"

"What, for nothin', mammy?"

"Yes, be sure; for Bridget Mahony what knows, says she's—no, poor wasn't the word,—but powerful hard to get along. And 'twon't be for nothin' neither, Tommy."

"Mammy, I wish you'd help me find my clothes, for I'm so sleepy I can't hardly do nothin'. I couldn't sleep in the first ind of the night, 'kase my foots was so cold."

"Here's your own warm shoes and stockins, Tommy, what Miss Morton give you, dear."

"And how could she buy 'em, mammy, if she warn't rich?"

"She begged 'em from some of her rich acquaintance, dear; and you know Mr. Ball, one

of them acquaintance of hern, is to give you a cloak to-morrow."

"Ha, and don't I wish I had it to-day?" said Tommy.

"Oh! well, dear, you got a good pair of mittens, you know, what you found in the street yesterday. I'm sure, sartain sure, Providence dropped 'em for you, and they'll keep your fingers from frost bites, like Sam Hunt's, you know. Poor fellow can't work no more till they'm well. That's a good, dear, darlin' boy, hurry now, else they'll have it done afore you get there. And you know how she sot up with Mike, dear little Mike, and held his hand whin he was dyin', and shut his eyes whin he was did. And you know, Tommy, she promised whin the days was longer—that is, Miss Kate, I mane—that you should be taught writin', and cypherin', and readin' too, and that'll make a man of you, you know, and you'll be able to arn your own livin', and to hilp me, and Sally too."

All through this appeal, the woman's fingers were moving as fast as her tongue.

"Yes, mammy, I'll be fixed in a minute. I'm sorry I was so long gittin' awake, but my foots

was so cold in the night, else I don't think I would a been so slow."

"The darkness is only jist a beginnin' to go, dear, so you'll be not by any manes too late; and whin you've shovelled away clane the snow afore her dour, go till Mr. Larch's; you mind he tilled you to come, and thin you'll have a little change to buy breakfast. It's better to work for bread thin to beg for it, dear, and a nice hot breakfast we'll have thegither. Button up your jacket close, Tommy, and you'll find in one of your pockets a pace of brid, what I saved for you last night from my supper. Now you're all ready, sonny, run, and don't forgit your shovel."

Off ran the light-hearted and light-clad urchin, with no part of his body secured from the cold but hands and feet. Through his tattered garments the wind gambolled so freely, that he might have addressed it, as the frogs did the boys.

It would be difficult to describe Charles's surprise when he opened the street door, and saw that his work was done; and it formed a matter of speculation for the remainder of

the day and evening. The secret might have remained undiscovered, perhaps for ever, had not Jack Withers, who lived near, been sent to the doctor's, and observed Tommy hard at work.

When Charles was going to school, Mrs. Morton called him back, and said,—

"I wish you would stop at Mrs. Bond's, dear, and tell her I shall expect her on Friday, and ask her to come early."

"Why in the world, mother, do you invite Mrs. Bond here so often?" asked Charles, in a somewhat discontented tone, and added, "I don't think she's at all interesting."

"It is some time since I invited guests on that ground," said his mother gravely. "I have no doubt the visit will be *interesting* to the poor old woman; and, perhaps, if you had an opportunity of judging, you might discover in her some qualities, not wholly uninteresting."

"May-be so, mother; but they must be deeply buried. How silent and absent she is."

"Ah! my child, if you knew her trials, you would not be surprised that she is less companionable, and gay, than the butterflies who are

always in the sunshine among the flowers. Wait a moment, dear; you will be early enough at school."

Mrs. Morton took from the book-case a large book. Charles thought it was a dictionary; he was mistaken. She opened it, and read aloud the following words:—

"When thou makest a dinner, or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors, lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed, for they cannot recompense thee."

Without making a single comment, Mrs. Morton closed the book, and replaced it. Charles looked abashed, and bidding his mother good morning, left the room. He never forgot the reproof, and poor, old, despised Mrs. Bond became henceforth in his imagination a sort of heroine.

In the evening, as Kate was sitting alone in her mother's room, finishing an article which she did not consider parlor work, Charles entered

with an armful of books, and seated himself beside her. He took up one book, opened it, turned over the leaves, closed it, and went through the others in the same way. At length he said, leaning down very close to Kate, "Do you know that John Frisby is going to sea soon?"

"I have heard so," she answered, without raising her eyes.

"Perhaps I might get in the same vessel, and that, you know, would be very different from going alone."

"But why go to sea, brother? Can't you earn your living without such a risk,—and going away so far from us!" She turned her head aside, for she did not wish him to see the impertinent tears which resisted all her hints to keep out of sight.

"Why, what a forgetful little puss you are. Don't you remember that I told you, as mother never would consent to my leaving school, that I must ——"

Charles hesitated for a suitable word. "Run away," seemed to him disgraceful, and as it entered his mind, it brought a picture of the dear

home—his mother's silent despair—his sister's tears—Ned's dreary moanings—Jessie's frightful ravings—and he, the cause of all this desolation,—a wanderer.

Kate turned her head to see why he had ceased speaking. "You know," he resumed, "mother will never give her consent, and I think may-be I might find *him* in some far-away country, and then how glad you would all be that I had gone. Why, sister, a great many boys have gone to sea, and a great many without their mothers' consent!"

"Yes, but not such a mother, Charley."

"No, for I don't think there ever was such a one," said the boy, emphatically.

"And you would break her heart, eh? Oh! you are a cruel, cruel, cruel boy, and don't deserve to have such an angel watching over you night and day. Oh! my *own* dear mother!" She was too much excited, and too much provoked at such cruelty, to try any longer to conceal her feelings; she laid her head on the table, and wept bitterly.

"*Your own* mother, Kate! not mine? *She* wouldn't say so, though I should be a great deal

more disobedient than I've ever been, or ever intend to be," exclaimed the boy, in a sad, subdued tone. That little sentence had cut him to the heart more keenly, than any thing Kate had ever uttered, in all their childish disputes and bickerings. It was the first time that she had ever set up her claim to any exclusive rights, or ever seemed to recognize the fact, that they were not all bound by the same tie to her, who had ever folded them to her heart with equal affection.

Charles rose, lighted a lamp, picked up his books, and went towards the door, but a good fairy, or angel, or some invisible prompter, drew him back, and bending down, he kissed Kate, who was still leaning on the table, and still crying, and said, in a sad tone,

"Good night, sister—I suppose we are brother and sister, still?"

"Good night, Charley, good night," she said, almost inaudibly. If she had imagined how very much she had wounded his feelings, she would have added something more; but her mother occupied all her thoughts, and all her

feelings—and her brother seemed to her to have suddenly become a monster of cruelty. "The sound child-slumber which the thunder could not break," visited neither brother nor sister that night.

CHAPTER X.

Poor, unhappy boy! he had not found in Kate the counsellor he hoped. His mother must not be consulted,—Philip Preston could not understand him (besides, he was away), but perhaps his father might; he would go to him, for he had no idea of acting unsupported by some one's advice, if he could avoid it; so the next day, after school, he called to see Mr. Preston. He had been his father's earliest friend, and a most faithful one to his mother, and so frank and buoyant, that the children had no fear of him.

Charles was welcomed by a smile, and a warm pressure of the hand, which more, even than his kind words, expressed how glad he was to see his noble boy, as he always called him.

The boy, with much embarrassment, but very

clearly, stated his difficulties, and his plans. His friend heard him through, without the least expression of surprise or opposition, so that all the arguments he intended to use were unnecessary; but there was a very quizzical expression on his face, which Charles could not understand.

"As I've always said, Charley, you're a noble boy," exclaimed Mr. Preston, "but I don't feel free to give you any advice to-day. Wait till to-morrow. If, when you rise to-morrow morning, you are as anxious to leave us as you are now, I promise you to look for a situation, and do all I can to get you off."

"Oh! thank you, thank you, Mr. Preston. I can't tell you how much I am obliged to you, sir," said the boy, overpowered by so unexpected a promise.

"Tell your mother, Charley, that I'm coming round to see her this evening. Don't forget to tell her, my dear, that she may be at home."

"No, sir," said Charles, with so inquiring an expression, that Mr. Preston instantly understood, and replied to it: "You needn't fear me, my boy, for I've never betrayed confidence, and I'm too old to begin now. Good-by, you suspicious little dog."

"Good-by, sir, and please forgive me," said Charles, as he seized the hand which had been extended to him, in the most friendly manner.

The time for Charles's return from school came, but he came not. Tea time came, but he had not returned. Where could he be? such an event had never before happened. Mrs. Morton was anxious, but all her feelings were locked in her heart. Poor little loving Kate, she thought of their parting the night before, of his strange resolution, and she trembled to such a degree that she could hardly stand; and when twilight came on, and deepened into darkness, dear loving little Kate—her state was sad indeed. Poor blind Ned, too, he had inquired for Charles so often, that he began to share the panic; and sweet Jessie, who had been wandering about till dark, now came in with her pet kitten in her arms. She saw that something had happened, and not seeing Charles, seemed to have an idea that he was in some way connected with the general gloom.

"Charley, Charley—not home—under the lilac bush in the garden—eh! dead, buried under the bush in the garden—eh! dead—what,

Charley dead—brother Charley"—and she gave a shriek that electrified every body. At this moment the door opened, and Mr. Preston entered.

"I knocked, but as no one chose to hear me, I walked in," said he. "But what ails Jessie? and, indeed, what ails you all?"

Mrs. Morton took his hand, and whispered—"Charles is not at home, and we do not know what has become of him."

"Not at home!" ejaculated Mr. Preston. "Did he not come home from school?"

"No," replied the wretched mother, in the same low voice.

"Strange!" cried Mr. Preston. "I saw him this morning on his way from school, and told him to say that I would be here this evening."

"You saw him!" exclaimed Kate, coming up to Mr. Preston, and laying her hand on his arm. "Did you say you saw him, sir?" cried Ned, who had felt his way up to Mr. Preston. Jessie, who had dropped down in a corner, and sat coiled up, singing one of her wild snatches, caught Ned's words, and joining the group ex-

claimed—"see him—yes—yes—yes, under the lilac—lilac—lilac bush—under the lilac bush." And again she returned to her corner, and continued singing.

"Yes, I saw him," continued Mr. Preston, "and he had a little bundle in his hand."

"A bundle!" exclaimed Kate—"Oh—oh dear—oh dear, it's all over—it's all over"—and she gave way to such a burst of agony, that every one was shocked. In a few minutes turning to Mr. Preston she said, "Jessie talks so much about the lilac bush, wouldn't you be so kind, sir, as to look there. She has told us about things that were lost in her crazy way."

In an instant Mr. Preston was searching all parts of the garden, as well as under the lilac bush. There he found a drawing which Charley had made for her, and the leaves of one of his copy books, scattered about. The moon shone very bright, and he could see every thing distinctly. He returned to the house, perplexed and troubled.

There was so much frankness and honesty in the boy's manner, he found it difficult to imagine that he had deceived him, yet what else could he think?

Poor Kate! she laughed and cried alternately, and uttered such self-reproaches, that her mother in trying to soothe her, almost forgot her lost child. At length, from some of the girl's incoherent expressions, the cause of her distress dawned upon her. Her precious boy—her pride—for whom she had toiled, and hoped, and feared, who was becoming every day more and more like the husband she had so long deplored—the staff of her age—the stay of those poor stricken ones, when she was gone—he had left her, voluntarily left her, followed his father's example, and left her! One glance at the terrible picture was enough to deprive her of consciousness.

It was a sad sight, to see Kate rousing herself, and rubbing her mother's cold hands, and kissing her icy lips—Ned, feeling his way round the room, and moaning in the most melancholy manner. Fortunately Jessie had wandered out before her mother fainted. Before Mrs. Morton had recovered sufficiently to be raised, the street door opened, and a merry voice was heard saying—

"Well, I've come at last; I suppose you

thought I was lost," and Charles bounced into the room. But when he saw his mother supported by Mr. Preston, Kate kneeling beside her, and Ned sitting on the floor with his face buried in his hands, he was struck dumb ; and before he had time to inquire what all this meant, his mother had risen, tottered towards him, and folded him to her heart, exclaiming, " My own Charley—and you are alive and well —oh ! if you had known "—her emotion overcame her, and she fell into a chair.

" My dear, dear mother ! " cried the astonished boy, kissing her tenderly.

" Yes, Charley," said Kate, whose eyes showed how she had suffered, " you've almost killed mother, and Ned, and Jessie, and all of us." Ned said nothing, but kissed his hands over and over again.

" Now tell us how it was," said his sister.

" As I have not quite killed you," replied Charley, trying to regain composure, " I will explain. But where is Jessie ? " No one had missed her before ; indeed, her habits were so erratic, that her absence was seldom noticed ; now every one was excited, and prepared for catastrophes.

Instantly there was a search, and Charles found her coming from her favorite haunt in the garden, cold as it was, with her dress thrown over her head and shoulders. Her brother's voice caught her ear, as she was singing to some of her imaginary friends. She shook him, patted him, and called him "naughty, naughty brother, to kill her pretty birdies, and bury them under the lilac bush, and under the cold, cold snow."

He put his arm round her waist, and lifted her into the room, promising to be naughty no more.

"Now, listen to my story," he said, "good folks all; and if you find it wondrous short, it cannot hold you long; and if you find it wondrous long, your patience must be short." At this they all laughed, even Mrs. Morton. "After school, I went to Mr. Preston's, then I went to Mr. Lane's with the bundle of clothes."

"Oh, that bundle!" cried Kate.

"And I forgot all about it!" exclaimed her mother.

"Yes," he resumed, "the bundle for Mr. Lane's children, and just as I had left her house,

I saw an old man,—oh! very, very old, and though he walked very carefully, his foot slipped and he fell down. I was dreadfully frightened. I thought he was killed, but I helped him up; he said he lived across the ferry. He trembled so that I offered him my arm, and went to the boat with him, and just as I was coming on shore, the boat moved off. May-be it was well it did, for the old man wanted help, when he left the boat, so I went home with him, and if you had seen the joy of his children, at his safe return, I know you would not mind being a little frightened."

"A little frightened, indeed!" exclaimed his sister.

"Well, a good deal frightened, dear! and now I'm here safe, but marvellously hungry and tired, so don't scold please!"

"No indeed," said Mr. Preston, "we must have no scolding to-night."

Gratitude and affection sweetened their repast, and all sad anticipations were forgotten.

After supper, Mr. Preston and Mrs. Morton had a long conversation alone, the amount of which we shall give our readers.

Mr. Preston's quizzical look, when listening to Charles's plans in the morning, had important meaning in it. He had received several letters from Mrs. Morton's erring husband; of this he had informed her, but entreated that she would not allow her hopes to mislead her, as there were so many chances against their being realized. It would be wiser to say nothing to the children, until his actual presence should put an end to all doubts. His letters were filled with expressions of penitence and affection. After many difficulties and disappointments, losing at one time all his earnings by fraud, at another by shipwreck; he now possessed enough to pay all his debts and support his family. Without this, he would never have returned.

His last letter stated that he was in a neighboring town, and only waited until Mr. Preston should transact his business, and prepare his family for so unexpected an event. He had not written to his wife, because he wished his old friend to use his own judgment in the matter.

A month after this, father, mother, children were gathered together, all but little Willie, who was making a visit to one of his mother's

kind friends, and was not to return till spring. The prematurely bent, and gray-haired man had humbled himself to ask his children's forgiveness, and they had poured forth such warmth of affection, that his happiness was complete. His wife's heart, he knew too well, to fear that it would be closed against him.

"Well, Charley, when do you expect to sail?" asked Kate archly, when the effervescence of their joy had subsided.

"Oh! sister, say no more about that, dear; and now you can go to school."

"Oh! and may-be Ned may have a"—she stopped, as if afraid of being too bold.

"What, dear child? speak out."

"A piano for Ned, father."

"That he shall, and a teacher too, Ned." The poor blind boy rested his head on his father's shoulder, while tears of joy streamed down his cheeks.

"Yes, yes, my poor deserted darlings, my thoughts shall henceforth be directed to your welfare: and my dear, devoted Jane, one life, or rather the small portion which I may enjoy, seems too short to repay you for all your love and forbearance."

Jessie, who was fast locked in his arms, and smoothing his white locks, broke forth—"Yes, yes, love mother, good mother—and Moll too. Moll, do you know Moll—poor Moll?"

"No, sweet child, no," he exclaimed in a tone which proved how fully he realized, that there was one affliction which must continue.

The children were too much accustomed to Jessie to enter into his feelings; Kate jumped and shouted, "Oh! yes, yes; that mysterious book, mother—oh! yes, you'll let father see it, won't you?"

"And I suppose, mother," said Charles, "that you'll let me guess now who wrote it for us!"

"Yes, yes, dear—anything you please at present; and you shall all have it," she said, taking the book from a drawer, and handing it to Charles. "I am glad," she added, "that it served to amuse you, while the clouds were so dark."

"Well, mother," said the happy boy, "it's all sunshine now. And will you forgive me for being so unkind as to think of leaving you?"

"All, all is forgiven, my dear son," she said, as she pressed him affectionately to her heart.

"And remember, children," said Mr. Morton, "that I shall expect you to read to me this evening from that 'Mysterious Book;' and now run off, and let me have a little quiet talk with your mother. Mind, I don't want to see you again for at least an hour."

THE END.

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